



銅賞受賞作品
ジャンプホラー小説大賞

殺戮×凶恋×人肉
超問題作
解林示!!
選考会激然の

ピュグ種を蒔くマリオン

前編

著：坊木椎哉 イラスト：つくぐ

The Pygmalion is Planting Seeds

Contents

- The Pygmalion is Planting Seeds - Volume 01
 - Chapter 01
 - Chapter 02
 - Chapter 03
 - Chapter 04
 - Chapter 05
 - Chapter 06
 - Chapter 07
 - Chapter 08
- The Pygmalion is Planting Seeds - Volume 02
 - Chapter 09
 - Chapter 10
 - Chapter 11
 - Chapter 12
 - Chapter 13
 - Chapter 14
 - Chapter 15 (final)
- Translator's Note
- Editor's Note
- Credits

The Pygmalion is Planting Seeds - Volume 01

Chapter 01



The red-purplish flower inaudibly withered away after a slant gleam.

At the top of the pot overflowed with dirt, she was holding her knees while gazing at the empty space with her crystal clear eyes.

I gently leaned down and reached over her bare and smooth skin. Judging from the temperature transmitted through the palm of my hand, I could assume that the time for her awakening had already been set. By looking at her current expression, I can only feel that she's calling for me to wake her up.

Just a bit more and the daylight will completely vanish, making this room sink into the darkness of the night entirely.

I need to behave before the darkness drives out the evening. Otherwise, the retainers of the night will come and take her away again.

I took the dagger and inserted the edge, cautiously, between the sole of her foot and cut off the root.

Contrary to its appearance, the root was soft like a slenderly spun silk thread and didn't transmit the least bit of resistance to the dagger's blade.

After being released from her yoke, her sight did not stop wandering in the hollow.

Five minutes, ten minutes, twenty minutes.

Similar to a child excitedly looking forward to the start of a circus, I kept anxiously waiting for her to speak while swallowing up my saliva.

However, she kept silent the entire time, looking no different from a delicately carved sculpture. The root that was holding her down had already gone, yet she didn't show a sign of standing up and kept roaming her empty sight straight ahead.

I started grinding my teeth.

(Why?)

A sad result again. It's useless no matter how many times I try.

(Just why?!)

Where did I mess up? Is there something I'm lacking? I have no actual clue.

Even after pouring all my efforts, time and everything for her sake, this is the result.

[Why the heck?!]

My boiling anger welled up from my mouth as a loud scream, but she didn't show any sign of being frightened.

I barely stood up relying on my desperate legs and look down at her.

My throat was dried up, and pain ran through my eyes.

The sensation of my hand had vanished somewhere, and I already stopped sensing the smell floating around the house.

People would call this place hell.

They would probably also call me a devil.

No, I'm not a devil.

I am a child picking up stones in vain. The stones that I diligently piled up will mercilessly destroy the devil, over and over again.

I am eternally performing a play in a pitiful, ridiculous, and pathetic scene.

But despite everything, I need to continue stacking up those stones. Believing that one day, she will come and take me out of this spine-chilling wasteland.

It is the only thing that I can do after all.

I moved the blade of the knife directly across her outstretched neck and pulled it out in one go.

Brand new lines of blood started streaming out in this dimly lit room.

A flower that can trigger the memories of the graduation ceremony, the first thing that usually comes to mind are cherry blossoms. In the town where I live, cherry blossoms are quite unfashionable, since they always die away, along with their light pink color before even blooming. That's why, the image of the apricot flower that blooms at the perfect time, have the strongest impact on me rather than the cherry blossoms when recalling the graduation ceremony.

Though either way, the graduating students gathering in the front yard of the school don't care about what flower is blooming; they are instead regretting the parting of their friends and the farewell of their typical school.

[Already graduation, three years sure did past in the blink of an eye]

While receiving the spring's sunlight, my classmate Isezaki Akira was looking at the shining white school building with deep emotions. He had entered a prestigious private university early in the new year, and is now peacefully enjoying the last moments of his school life. A world of difference from me, who failed entirely in the first term exams, and is now waiting for the final test results while trembling in fear.

[Indeed, these three years have passed in just a moment]

My murmur didn't seem to reach anybody's ear due to the clatter.

A few girls entering the classroom and handing an autograph collection to the homeroom teacher catches my attention.

On that paper, my name, Mamesaki Kuuya, was not written there. I mean, not having the least idea of what to write and just dashing off some uninteresting words like: [thank you for this year, take care] wasn't something I would bring myself to do.

[Everyone, gather over here, we're taking a picture]

The one who called for us holding a smartphone in her hand, was yet another classmate of mine, Iruse Misaki. With her model-like figure and innocent character, many male students have fallen for her. But out of all of them, Isezaki was the only one who remained in the boyfriend's position for the whole three years.

[Isezaki and Iruse sit in the center. Ah, and everybody move a little bit to this side]

By the guidance of the voluntary male student photographer, a dozen of people were cramped in one place. Making my way inside the crowd, I took the seat right in the back of Misaki and Isezaki.

Thinking about it now, Isezaki and Misaki were in the same class for three years. Which means that they showed off their intimacy every single day to people. Misaki entered a local college, so it was quite clear that their relationship will remain this way for a very long while.

[Alright, I'm taking it!]

At the moment the shutter was pressed, a spring breeze brought Misaki's hair odor to my nose.

As a result, my face was half strained and half slacked clinging to a shameful expression in the photo.

The eighteenth spring, youth's frame.

A few days later, I failed at making it to university, and my new Ronin life had started.

My parents divorced when I was in the sixth year of grade school. I haven't been told the reason.

It was my mother who left the house and me. Since then, we spent two years together before she passed away. It's been more than six years now since I last met my father.

The one who proposed to live with me after my mother's death was my uncle, the little brother of my dad, Haruhito.

Thus currently, I'm living under the same roof with him. Whether my father knew about my mom's passing or not, he kept on sending 50 000 yen every month to my bank account as a child-rearing expense, to which I entirely give to Haruhito as rent.

I was recommended to enter a preparation school, but I positively declined in order to choose the ronin path instead, only because the concentration courses and the trial examinations will end up costing an enormous amount of money.

[A kid like you doesn't need to think about unnecessary stuff like this. If it's about money, I'll somehow manage it, just go!]

I was grateful for his words, but having someone paying for you dozens of thousands of yen the entire year doesn't feel right. At the end of a long discussion, the one who gave in was Haruhito.

Like this, my Ronin life had begun.

I sought the city's library for studying since staying in the house all time made me depressed. So my intention of going out was to change my mood, more than thinking about increasing my studying efficiency.

The library I go to is separated from the house by three train stations and is situated in the city center. Every time I walk my way through the traffic jam, I become obligated to witness the busy salarymen passing near me and the active faces of the youths strutting through the ground while chattering with each other. I had a hard time acting as if I'm not annoyed by being surrounded by these kinds of people.

I leave the house at nine of the morning, devote myself to studying the whole day

in the library, and when the sun sets, I take the train back home, leaving behind the nightly town that gets absorbed by the allurements and lust of people.

My regular life was nothing but the repetition of these days.

As I continued to live this routine full of ups and downs, encountering Misaki again was an absolute coincidence.

On the night of the day when the start of the new rainy season was announced, I chose to walk a different path to the station with fewer people in it this time.

Approaching a small park gulped down between the buildings, I noticed a flower vendor stall, established right below the street light. Cut flowers potted in plainly made pots were garnishing a gorgeous assortment to the sorrowful street corner.

...a flower selling stall at this time of night?

Getting all curious about this unusual combination in the street, I concentrated my attention to the client who was appraising the selling flowers while squatting.

It was Misaki.

Seeing her wearing normal clothes was a first time for me, however, after spending three years with her in the same classroom, there was no way I could mistake her for someone else. Not even two months have passed since I last saw her at the graduation ceremony and she already turned into a beautiful, mature woman.

The person who was dealing with her was a little girl wearing a black summer knit. Perhaps her parents left her to guard the store.

Gazing at her slender figure I can only assume that she's a middle schooler at most.

The little girl unintentionally turned toward me.

What drew my attention, even more, was her mysterious beauty that stood out despite being surrounded with all of those bright flowers in their full blooming stage. Snow white skin not yet touched by anyone, black irises reflecting a melancholic sense, and a well-ordered face starting from a small nose, and continuing down to her young lips resembling flower buds. Her type is different from Misaki's, but she was indeed a beautiful girl. If Misaki is an elegantly blooming dalia under the sunlight, then the little girl is a night-blooming Cereus waiting for the dawn light, while quietly basking under the moonbeam.

However, somewhere inside those perfect looks of hers, I can also receive a somewhat cold impression coming out. That beauty reflected a feeling as if she had slipped up from an illusional painting, drawn by an artist who poured all of his heart and might into performing it, or in other words, a very unrealistic beauty. That is how perfect her looks were arrayed.

[How can I help you?]

A thin voice, as if ringing a brass bell, yet, its reverberation didn't seem to leave my ears.

It took me a small while to realize that she directed those words towards me. I couldn't act naturally at that time. It's only normal, I mean, my mind was so full thinking about a way to call out for Misaki while I was standing like a fool in front of both them.

[Hm, is that you Mamesaki?]

Misaki raised her head. I instantly noticed the little makeup she had on her initially clear face.

[Yeah, I mean, I happened to pass by here and saw a familiar figure you see]

While being all nervous, I tried my best at making a smile.

[Are you returning from a task tonight, Mamesaki?]

[Yeah, I was studying in the library]

Although I knew very well that there was no meaning in putting on airs, I still vaguely obscured the fact of me being a Ronin.

Behaving as if she is not even interested in what I said, she answered with an "I see", and stood up after seizing a plastic bag with a potted plant inside.

[I'd like to take my time and talk with you, but I am kinda busy right now, so maybe next time]

Swinging my hands while chasing her leaving figure with my eyes, I started considering what to do after this. I didn't have the intention of buying flowers from the beginning. I just recognized someone I know and dropped by to greet them.

[Are you perhaps her acquaintance?]

Just when I decided to stick a random reason and leave, the little girl asked me, of course, I couldn't just ignore her and go on my way.

[She was a classmate of mine back in high school, does she come here often?]

[Yes, she's a regular customer who comes here every once in awhile. Countless people call out to me without even intending to buy anything, so visitors like her are very precious]

Looking at her beauty I wouldn't be surprised by the number of window shoppers. It's a man's nature to be attracted to a talking flower after all.

Thinking about such a thing I checked the price tags and was taken aback. All of them were absurdly expensive.

[Rather than not intending to buy, don't you think that they just lost the intention of doing so?]

[Despite these high prices, some people still purchases them from me. Like a drunk customer who lost control over his wallet, or a salary man returning home in the morning forgetting about his wedding anniversary. Even after noticing that the prices are higher than the ones in the market, if he can just buy it, then he would gladly pay up]

Throwing away the innocent character appropriate for her age, the little girl started speaking in a mature manner, exhibiting my first mysterious impression I had of her. Maybe taking this attitude which is contrary to her pure and innocent outward appearance is a result of dealing with different people at this kind of place and time.

I didn't plan on buying anything from her in the first place, so I will probably get in the way of her work by staying here for too long. I randomly attached a few words and left the place behind.

[Let me know if you have a particular flower you don't need, I can purchase it from you]

.....A flower vendor, buying flowers from a customer?

Walking my way back to the train station, the strange words the little girl have emitted toward me remained hanging in my ears.

During the time I was on the train, I started recalling the gossip I overheard in my high school days.

The rumor of the flower vendor in the street corners.

The beautiful little girl that appears in the night street corners and sells her flowers to the bypassing people.

Besides the fact that she opens her stall at the night, nobody knows how and from where does she appear from.

Taking the same approach as a phantom and manifesting out of the blue in unexpected places, it is said that all of those who see her gets visited by good fortune.

A silly story made to grab the interest of the youth. Until graduating, I didn't hear anybody saying they encountered her, though.

[A little flower vendor girl carrying happiness along, huh...]

Who knows, maybe they are the same person.

While thinking about the little girl, Misaki's face overlapped as well.

Not the face of the mature Misaki that I just saw earlier, but the one that still had the lingering feelings of innocence back in my high school period.

Ronin: a person who failed every entrance exam for university and is waiting for another chance.

Chapter 02



[I was looking for you]-Mysterious murder-Disappearance-Urban legends

The school building dyed by the evening light.

A heart in the peak of breaking off.

My own heart that got stricken.

The vague smile filled with bewilderment she returned after receiving my Confession.

[I'm glad about your feelings, but I never saw you in that kind of light, Mamesaki.]

Hearing out her reply, I finally became aware that my love was entirely demolished.

The bittersweet twilight memories of the fall of my first year in high school.

That had happened a short while before I heard Isezaki and Misaki started going out.

15 minutes after moving three stations by train, the townscape began to get considerably empty.

Before the new city center got developed, this place was the heart of the town. Currently, not a single trace of it being used in the past could be detected. The hustle of the high street I left not too long ago seems to be in a very distant world now.

Approaching my house, the figure of females stinking from face powder and holding a nylon tote bag in their hands started to stand out here and there. They're going out for work it seems. Wearing skinny jeans while walking through the street, their fat bottoms were performing a lascivious dance.

Meanwhile, a drunk geezer sitting on the stool folded in front of a liquor store was loudly snoring. The amount of empty liquor bottles rolling on the ground beside him clearly describes how much he had drank this night. Seeing the comfortable figure of an old man drinking from daytime until the middle of the night wasn't that rare of view in this area after all.

My house is situated in the red-light district, or plainly speaking, the place where the obscene ambiance of prostitution flows around. Back in the days, it was a very prominent and prospering licensed red-light quarter around the whole country; a place that was even admired as the holy ground of lust seekers everywhere. Now however, it became a spot where only vulgar, shameful women and filthy geezers reeking of alcohol could be seen. A worn out district left behind by the flow of time.

The windows of the erotic tea houses joined along the street buildings lined up dazzling lights throughout the road. Inside one of them with a half-opened door, I caught the sight of a well dressed up "flower" kneeling down on the floor.

[This is the new girl who started yesterday. she may look quiet, but she's pretty amazing once she undresses, how about 18000 yen?!]

A middle-aged woman was standing next to her and bargaining with the new client, whereas the flower did not speak.

The men who got possessed by the bewitching beauty of the girls inside, willingly open up their wallets and pay up.

People who are seeking lust and obscenity gather every night in this place, exactly like how summer insects swarm around a bug zapper. Those who seem to be at loss and are going back and forth in the same alley, those who intimately exchange greetings with the old maids of the street, the night bargainers and the dead drunkards chased out from the stores. Various human relationships were unfolding in this district where the impure flowers were insatiably blooming in profusion every single night.

Despite being accustomed to the street, the uncomfortable sense of stepping in the wrong place doesn't cease to follow me around. A bit too stimulating of an atmosphere for the diligent youth of society.

Exiting the principal street, a short distance before the shopping arcade, silently stood an ancient geisha house. That building that remained without reconstruction preserving its strong, indecent image was indeed my house, or correctly speaking, Haruhito's house.

[I'm home!]

Taking off my shoes in front of the door, a lively young looking person descended the stairs and came up to welcome me.

[Hey, welcome back! You're pretty late aren't ye?]

[I just dropped by somewhere on my way back. Nevertheless, you were quick to come back this time, Haruhito]

[Dammit, that old man. At the moment when I was about to depart, he contacted me again. The company doesn't provide me with the travel expenses here for god's sake]

Haruhito works as a freelance writer, so he quite often leaves the house for long periods of time to collect information. Not even four days ago, he left a message saying [I'll be away for three weeks] and departed to Tokyo, but apparently, the information provider canceled the meeting at the last minute.

[I'll be making dinner now, so wait for me in your room]

In this house, Haruhito is assigned with the cooking duty. Being a freeloader, I felt bad about it, so I once tried making something instead, however, instantly after Haruhito ate a mouthful of the dish I made, he displayed a painful expression and

I never stepped into the kitchen again since that day.

Every time I eat the meal that Haruhito makes, I become relieved. After all, that Yurina woman he always hires when leaving for work, forget cooking, she doesn't even know how to use a knife properly. It was the first time I saw someone washing rice using a detergent.

Walking up the stairs, I entered my room.

There are four rooms in the corridor of the second floor. The wall between the first two was broken down and is used as a workplace for Haruhito to set all of his documents in. The third room is Haruhito's bedroom, with the last, innermost one being my own.

Previously, it was being used as a temporary nest for prostitutes and clients to get all well and harmonious, which leaves off various awkward sensations hanging inside, but by driving out these kinds of ideas, it starts to only feel like an old-fashioned wooden house.

I'm terribly tired today. Maybe it's because I was nervous while talking to Misaki.

Getting completely engulfed in drowsiness, I was quickly drawn to the land of sleep.

I saw a dream.

A dream that I've been repeatedly seeing since the day I graduated from middle school.

I was walking down a dark path while my mother drew my hand.

As if she forgot how to bend her neck, she was looking straight ahead the whole time, without turning her face to me.

I wanted to see my mother's face and started turning round and round like a satellite, but for some mysterious reason, I couldn't see it no matter from which angle I looked up from.

Where are you going?

Looking as if she had been possessed by something, my mother didn't answer my question.

With rushed steps, we continued to walk in the dark.

Those steps gradually got faster, making it harder for me to keep up with her.

I tried my best not to be left in this darkness alone.

With only that in mind, I chased after her back.

Suddenly, a ray of light appeared in front of the path.

My mother started sprinting at full speed.

Wait, mom. Don't go!

I desperately reached out my hands towards the streak of light.

[Hey! Dinner is ready!]

I was drawn back to reality by the calling voice of Haruhito. As if I was living the earlier dream, I realized that my hand was raised towards the ceiling.

Not even ten minutes have passed since I entered the room.

I open the kitchen door, and dinner's arrangement was already made. Placed in the center of the table was tonight's main dish, a large plate of twice cooked pork, along with the spicy miso soup made from frying cabbage and meat in garlic oil. Haruhito's special dish.

In the Mamesaki's evening meals, meat is added to everything without exception, and the refrigerator always has a lump of it stored inside. I think we're the only average family that stocks this amount of meat in their house.

[It's a human's instinct from ancient times to fulfill his desire of eating meat]

Or so Haruhito says.

[The ancient people ate it every time, and as a result, they acquired a more robust body than the one modern people have currently. The principal reason behind the fact that people shifted their eating habits from meat to focused diets was because of the increase in the price. It doesn't have anything to do with their conditions. In that case, to obtain both a healthy body and mind, you need to eat meat whenever you get the opportunity]

He might be going on too much about it by using meat in every single meal he prepares, but I think he's just worried about my health. My body is exceptionally small compared to anyone of the same age, not to mention the fact that I don't have the least bit of manly sturdiness. Because of my childlike face, I was quite often interrogated by police officers whenever I'm walking inside shopping centers.

Finishing dinner, I went back to my room.

I opened my reference book at the top of the desk, but Misaki's face comes back to mind, because of that, I didn't achieve any progress in my studies that night.

Misaki went missing.

I received this shocking information from a communication app one week after I last met her.

The sender was Isezaki.

According to my old classmates, they lost all contact with her three days ago.

Misaki's parents work overseas, so they get back home once a year. She even refused the housemaid they arranged for her, which makes her the only one living in the house. [My parents rarely get in touch with me, so I get the privilege to come back home whenever I feel like it], she said that while laughing, but who would think that her neglect and carelessness would ultimately backfire on her.

It seems that Isezaki was ignoring his university lectures to spend more time looking for her. His head was full of thoughts about Misaki the whole time to the point where everything else became irrelevant for him.

[If you know anything, no matter how trivial it is, please let me know!]

The bitter message he sent me made it clear that Isezaki was at the end of his wits.

Inside the app, everyone was thinking about a way to find her, putting on the air of a detective or developing their own theory about the situation. They were all emotionally touched by the fact that their old classmate went missing.

While gazing through the long series of conversations, a single idea sprouted in my head.

I want to find Misaki.

Assuming that she was dragged into a kidnapping incident, perhaps if I rescue her and bring her back safe, she will become my girlfriend, leaving Isezaki behind.

A faint delusion without any basis that anybody would probably break out in laughter after hearing it. But for me, who still holds onto a burning unrequited love towards Misaki, I can not help but think this way.

From the following day onwards, my simple daily life composed of nothing but going back and forth to the library was enhanced by the hard task of finding Misaki. I began ending my study sessions earlier than usual to walk around the town seeking for information. A self-satisfactory action I took for my own sake.

Of course, I do feel compassion toward Isezaki who's doing his best searching for her as well, but on the other hand, deep inside my heart, I thought that he deserved it.

So, under this gloomy enthusiasm, I wasn't able to find out any news about Misaki. It's a reasonable result. There's a limit on how much a penniless ronin, without any personal connections could investigate. In the first place, I don't have the slightest idea of where she could go.

I also checked Isezaki's state of progress every day, however, his impatience to find a single clue was sharply transmitted from the message letters. It seems that he wasn't able to get in touch with her parents either.

A week passed since Misaki's whereabouts were in the dark.

Isezaki's eager investigation is still on-going. Same as him, I didn't know when to give up and continued looking for her figure while roaming around the town repeating the same days full of despair and weariness.

[Hm? Kuuya! It's Kuuya!]

Ending my search in vain as usual, I was walking my way down the old street that was gasping frail light from both sides when a young woman called out to me while stuffing a lollipop in her cheek.

[What could a high school student be doing here in such a time? Wait, Kuuya is a high schooler? Ah right, you're a middle schooler, I forgot]

[I told you that I already graduated from high school! How about you, Sary?]

[I was given a vacation yesterday, but I completely forgot about it and went back

to work]

Sary was smiling with a frivolous face like an innocent little girl.

She is a prostitute. Her looks are not bad, but on the other hand, she has a bad memory and forgets about everything said to her after only walking a few steps forward. However, when it comes to remembering people's names and faces, she is the best, to the point where she could memorize every single word her client would say.

[By the way, Sary, did you ever see this person? She's a former classmate of mine]

I brought up the picture of graduation from my phone and showed it to Sary.

She tilted her head while looking at the frame and answered with [I dunno, never seen her~].

Judging from her reply, I understood that Misaki is nowhere around this vicinity.

[I'm sorry Kuuya, I'm not sure, but it seems I couldn't be of any help to you. Want some candy?]

She took out the wet lollipop from her mouth and offered it to me. I gently refused.

[Thank you, but I'm fine. Don't let it get you; everything is okay]

[Is that so? I don't know what's going on but stay strong. Perhaps you want me to comfort you?]

The reverberation of the word "comfort" coming out from her mouth had an awfully mature feeling.

Again, I evaded her question with a vague answer and left the place. Turning around, I saw her standing figure waving her hand and sending me off. By now, she had probably forgotten the fact that I showed her Misaki's picture entirely.

Sary's quite obviously relaxing her guard when I'm around. Not because we're friends, but because she is in love with me. However, I always pretend to not notice her feelings. It's not like I'm being faithful to Misaki or anything as such, but it's just because I don't feel like opening my heart to anyone except her.

A woman who has feelings towards me, and a woman who once dumped me in the past.

I wonder which one's warmth should I seek.

Another layer of weariness was appended to my dead shoulders.

I came back home at the moment when Haruhito finished dinner preparations.

[You've been coming back quite late these days]

[I thought I wouldn't be able to catch up to things, so I decided to stay in the library as long as possible]

I feigned tranquility and deceived Haruhito who's questioning me.

I'm hiding from him the fact that I'm looking for Misaki since I can see him scolding me saying something like, [someone who failed the entrance exams like you, doesn't have the time to play the detective!]

Tonight's dinner was fried meat and vegetables. A simple flavoring using only salt, but goes excellently along with rice.

[It's fine to work hard n' all but try not to stay too late. You could end up having your skin peeled off by the skin-shin old maid you know.]

[What's this skin-shin old maid?]

[It's an urban legend popular among kids around here. The skin-shin old maid who appears in the night holding a knife and peels off the skin of children she catches.]

Since Haruhito's job is often related to the true-stories and gossip kind of magazines, he is pretty knowledgeable about stuff like this. Back in the day, he even got himself pulled into dangerous situations many times.

Nevertheless, an old woman who rips off raw skin.

It's pretty disturbing but too detailed to be true.

[Not sure where kids nowadays get these sorts of ideas to be honest.]

[Well, usually an urban legend always has a basis from where it generates. I remember the incident of the mouth ripping woman, the mysterious murder case that occurred near the city three years ago]

[What's that?]

[The case where a child's corpse was discovered in the mountains. It got featured

in the media and became quite an uproar over here as well.]

Now that it was mentioned, something like that did indeed happen.

A five-year-old child admitted into an orphanage went missing when the nurse was distracted and was found dead a few days later, missing his right arm and having his back skin cruelly ripped off. That case caught the whole world's interest, however, three years have already passed, and no news about the criminal getting arrested was heard of yet.

[An urban legend is a derived work based on reality. By messing with the truth a little, sticking some decorations here and there, and giving it a backstory, it will turn into a successful modern fairy tale. So yeah, it's not entirely made up. On the contrary, holding a substance of reality gives it a wicked sense. Especially those carrying a high self-consciousness and who often get under the wrong impression would be easily deceived by such talk. People like you]

[Fft-cough-!]

I was about to gush out the cabbage from my mouth.

[Do I really look like someone who is often under the wrong impressions?]

[If you decide on something, you start stubbornly believing in it, and will not change your mind no matter what other people say. For better or for worse, you will recklessly proceed in your own way. Even after hearing out someone else's opinion and comprehending that you're running in the wrong direction, you're not gonna admit it, and you'll continue running until you fall off a cliff. That's dangerous you know, listen here...]

Before I realized it, the discussion turned into me getting lectured by Haruhito. Interrupting his words, I tried switching the conversation topic.

[By the way, what are the variations of urban legends?]

[Hm? What do you mean? Urban legends are the result of combining people's interests and imaginations after all...]

I somehow managed to avert the course of the talk.

[The motif could be different, but the stories' pattern are generally the same. The motif doesn't matter if it could stir up your interest. Whether it could be about night taxis, unsolved murder cases, fast food, popular anime series, prohibited entry to some ruins of an old coal mine, or even the little girl who sells match in winter]

The little girl who sells match!

After hearing Haruhito's words, as if I was thunderstruck, a flash flickered inside of my head.

I found it! A clue that connects to Misaki's whereabouts.

The little peddler girl in the street corners.

She is selling flowers instead of match, though.

It's rather odd that I forgot about her existence until now.

They both know each other. By some chance, she could happen to know something about Misaki's current location.

I swiftly finished eating my dinner,

[I'm going to borrow a reference book from a friend.]

and left the house behind along with Haruhito's voice telling me, [you can just delay it until tomorrow!], which I pretended not to hear.

Arriving at the shopping district, it was already 9:30 PM.

I continued wandering around the night town while praying not to be caught by a patrolling officer.

I knew that looking for her this way, was as hard as searching for a fallen seed in a sandy beach, but it was the only thing that I could do.

Assuming from the size of the store in my memories, it could not open in the principal streets with a regular footpath, so I focused on investigating large places and public parks since they hold enough space for a florist shop to set up.

Every short while, the sky would groan with deep black rain clouds obscuring the stars and the moon. I remembered the weather forecast reporting that it will start raining in the middle of the night. My foot started hurting from the pain of walking. It's not even definite whether she's in this town or not, yet I couldn't stop being restless about when I will be able to find her.

I didn't spot the flower vendor stall that was silently hiding behind the alley until the next 20 minutes before the date was about to change.

Without any customer to serve, the little girl was reading a book relying on the

street light.

I rushed out toward the flower vendor girl, like a traveler who was delighted by finally stumbling upon an oasis.

[Oh, you're the boy from that day. What's with that tired expression, are you okay?]

[I was looking for you.]

Without giving myself a chance to arrange my breath, I instantly answered the little girl who was blankly looking at my face.

[The girl who was with you last time, Misaki, went missing for almost two weeks now. Nobody can get in touch with her, and she didn't leave a letter behind. Her boyfriend and I are eagerly looking for her, but we can't grasp the smallest clue]

[And so, what does that have to do with me?]

[You're an acquaintance with her, right? I thought you'd know something and was looking for you the whole time. Could you tell me if you happen to know anything about the matter?]

[That's an unusual action to take for the sake of a friend. Why not just leave it to the police?]

[She lives alone separate from her parents, and her boyfriend refuses to ask the police. I know that acting alone won't settle the matter, but thinking that maybe she was dragged into some incident, I can't help but move around]

[You're quite enthusiastic, aren't you? Is it really because of your friendship, I wonder]

Her teasing words pierced right through my chest.

I feel like she saw through my embroidered, innermost feelings for Misaki. I was at a loss for a response.

The little girl gazed at my face as if she found something of intriguing and gently stood up.

[Rain, it seems]

A raindrop fell on my cheek as if it was conducted by the little girl's words.

[I will be closing up the shop today, there were no customers either way.]

The little girl started loading an eight seater parked near the road with her flower pots.

Before the rain started regularly falling, she finished loading the car and with a light jump, slid into the driver seat. As if it was nothing special.

[Come with me to the shop, I will explain everything once we get there]

The dark asphalt which was dry only a few minutes ago got polished by the falling rain.

Chapter 03



Shishikuibana- [What if God...]- Skull-The basement

The car drove onto the night street under the pelting rain, and the conversation between us didn't advance since we exchanged self-introductions in the start.

I was astonished by knowing that this little girl named Jinka Erisa, was the only manager of the flower stall, and even more, she had already acquired her driver's license.

I assume she's from the same generation as me, or rather, given the composed manner in which she talks, she could be even older.

[What an unpleasant rain. The rainy season has already begun it seems]

Jinka Erisa didn't open her mouth until we left the town's main road entering the industrial area. Her voice was as thin as a needle. Without being erased by the sound of the falling rain on the car frame, it readily reached my ears.

[Um, could you please tell me where we are going?]

[You are the same age as Misaki aren't you?]

[Yes, that's correct]

[In that case, you can just talk to me in a more familiar way. It sounds unusual to use honorifics towards a girl with a young appearance anyway, so no need to be humble]

[And so Miss Jinka, where are w-]

[Just call me Erisa, no need to stick the "Miss". I just told you, no need to be humble]

I scratched my head and resumed talking, this time, making sure not to use honorifics.

[So, do you know Misaki's whereabouts?]

[Why do you think so?]

[You didn't say that you don't know earlier]

[Well done! You see, I'm running a small florist in the suburb, and she's over there now]

My chest was heavily stricken by Erisa's abrupt declaration.

I finally found out Misaki's location. Not to mention, I'm already heading there. While trying my best to control my excitement, I asked Erisa.

[Misaki, is she safe?]

[The way you asked me sounds as if you're inquiring of the welfare of a kidnapped hostage]

[I'm sorry if I offended you. It's been a long time since I've last seen her, I was bit worried]

[Don't worry, I'm taking care of her in the shop. Though, it depends on you whether she will go back home or not]

[Depends on me? What you mean by that?]

Erisa's final words carried along an unpleasant premonition. When I asked her about their meaning, she made a puzzling smile and remained silent.

I started thinking about the inner intent of what she said.

I understood the fact that Misaki is in Erisa's shop. However, it is pretty dangerous to trust her proclamation blindly. She might be using this information as a bait to drag me to some sort of plot.

Taking captives, commercialized abduction, accusing me as her crime partner, or maybe even murdering me for her own pleasure. All of those negative ideas were swirling inside of my head. To top it off, I was irritated by myself who carelessly accepted her invitation of riding in her car.

The conversation ended since then and thirty minutes have passed. We arrived at an elegant, refined western style building that is embracing a broadleaf tree forest.

[This is my shop]

The front door opened, along with the sound of a light doorbell right after we got out of the car. A young woman wearing a white and light blue maid uniform came up to greet us.

[Welcome back, Milady. I'm glad to see you safe under this violent rain]

[Milady?]

[I was called this way since a long time ago, that's all]

I received a towel from the maid who somehow gave me the impression of the spring's gentle sunlight, and wiped off my hair and clothes.

[Her name is Kanade. She used to serve my father and is now working for my shop. Since I'm not very good at treating customers, you can say that she's the real manager of this place]

[Oh, please don't say that, all that I do, is sit at the counter the whole time]

[No need for modesty, you're doing a splendid job]

[Was it you who build this shop?]

Interrupting their conversation, I inquired Erisa.

[This place was originally made by a particular country's diplomat as a shed. My father purchased it, and currently, I'm using it as a florist]

And where's your father right now?

I barely avoided asking her such a risky question. Things will probably get awkward if I started touching upon delicate matters.

[Kanade, this person is Mamesaki Kuuya. He's the classmate of Iruse Misaki, the girl I brought in earlier that day. Try not be too loose around him]

Forgetting to greet back Kanade who was bowing her head toward me, I went directly to ask Erisa.

[Is Misaki really over here?]

[Yes, I can assure it to you]

Entering the room I was lead to by Erisa, its interior design had strong remains of it being used as a residence, matching with her earlier speech.

The counter that was supposed to be the former entrance hall was overflowing with different flowers of various colors and shapes, and their fragrance was floating around the whole place. Each flower vase was holding a significant and deep artistic design.

Raising my eyes, I saw a large antique chandelier hanging from the ornate ceiling. The building's insides were clearly far more luxurious than its' outside appearance.

While I was observing the shop left and right, Erisa walked into the back of the counter and pointed to a small door buried inside.

[It's pretty dark over her, so be careful of where you step]

The door was connected to some descending stairs. With Erisa in the front, Kanade in the rear and me entangled between them, we advanced towards the basement relying on the incandescent light of the ceiling lamps.

[This cellar seems to have existed here even before my father bought the house]

Erisa's voice overlapped with our unlined footsteps.

[The top floor is neat and all, but this place looks like plain concrete. The floor and walls were left full of black stains. Fufu, I wonder what this diplomat was using

such a gloomy basement for]

A cold chill ran down my spine after hearing Erisa's unconcerned words. Is she perhaps trying to scare me? Or maybe there's some kind of implication included along with her sentence? Looking at her walking slender back, I wasn't able to seize her intention.

After descending the stairs, an iron double door stood before us. Erisa pushed the door open and an awfully chilly white light drove the darkness in the stairs away.

The basement walls and floor were all affixed by pure white coating leaving not even a crack, and a huge refrigerator majestically stood in the interior of the room.

On the left side was a systematic kitchen, and close to it was a tatami sized stainless table.

Looking at the right side, I noticed a solid fireproof vault enclosed by a wide glass wall. With the fluorescent light barely reaching, it released an impression as if something special was stored inside.

At the center of the room, and as if I was the owner of the place, a pure white round table and well-furnished chairs with a curvature design, were automatically arranged.

Above, at the top seat, Erisa silently lowered her back and sat.

[Where's Misaki? Is she over here?]

I inspected the whole room, but Misaki was nowhere to be found.

[Everything has its own order. Let's have a little talk]

Since she was insisting, I couldn't help but take a seat.

Placing her chin on top of the back of her crossed hands, Erisa started to talk.

[Answer me Kuuya, what if God appeared in front of you and proposed to bring one of your passed good friends back to life, would you accept?]

I was at a loss for words after hearing Erisa's unexpected question.

The figure of my late mother popped in my head.

My mom who took care of me after divorcing my father.

I wasn't able to remember her looks, neither the facial expressions she used to show me.

[I just thought I'd ask you about it]

The one who interrupted the floating silence was Erisa.

[It's only natural to regret not doing this and that, or not talking that much with one's passed beloved person after all. It's normal to wish for them to come back from the realm of the dead]

[Is that so? I'd personally prefer to leave them resting]

I was finally able to squeeze out an answer.

[Bringing back someone to life means that you have ruined his last moments. Because life is limited, people give it value, and so they pay their respect toward those who already left for a journey to the other side. Don't you think so?]

[It sounds like an unreasonable talk a priest would say]

[Nobody can countdown the time left that someone has before they step into the coffin. Life is something that is illogically lost throughout time. The end abruptly knocks on the doors, without any prior notice nor restraint. I wonder how many people living a peaceful life were touched by the unforeseen death of their beloved persons]

Once again, I remember my mother.

I don't know the cause of my mom's death. I don't even remember what was I thinking on the day of her funeral.

The only thing I still remember is the fact that the small coffin window didn't open until the end of the cremation.

In other words, I didn't even have the chance to see her resting face.

[Kuuya, do you know about the story of 'The Monkey's Paw'?]

I nodded to her question. It's a famous British story about an old couple who accepted the paw of the monkey that will grant them three wishes and resulted with a calamity befalling upon them.

[You see, the fact their son came back to life wasn't mentioned anywhere. From the couple's conversation, it was hinted that he was involved in machinery and

was resuscitated with a torn body. Was it really their son who was striking the door late at that night?]

[If it wasn't their son, then what would it be?]

[From the tale's view, it is indeed the son who was knocking the door. It's a question of interpretation, you see, it is more appropriate to explain the story such that, making a wish which interferes with fate comes along with an enormous price. Even if it was an unforeseen incident for the concerned person, it is still the fate God had determined beforehand and should not be overturned no matter what. The cost that comes along with opposing fate is inestimable. A cost that not even parental love could handle]

[God is pretty unfair isn't he? Why not bring him back to life with his normal shape?]

[I think that God did give humans a bit of talent to overturn reason. What if the ability of The Monkey's Paw was flawless, and their son was resuscitated back to his standard form? They would then, probably throw away the cross and start devoting themselves to worshiping the Monkey's Paw instead. Although I'm not sure whether that would be a happy ending or not]

I was irritated by seeing the cold Erisa exchanging an unreasonable discussion with me.

What's her true intention for talking about this?

I didn't come here to speak about life and death.

I only want to check if Misaki is really safe.

I tried guiding the conversation back to where it began, but I couldn't grasp the initiative and was just writhing in agony instead.

I couldn't just explode in anger in this kind of situation. I felt that the truth was lurking somewhere inside her words.

From the beginning, she was looking at me with an expression as if she's testing me. If it weren't for a difficult conversation like this, I'd probably already be captivated by her shiny black eyes. She looks like she's waiting for me to touch the core of the matter. Am I supposed to open this Pandora's Box placed in front of my eyes, I wonder?

[Let me change my question a bit. If one day, your beloved person suddenly died, would you think about bringing them back to life]

The ominous words of Erisa gave me a cold chill.

[Beloved person? Who may that be?]

[Anybody you want]

[Look! I don't understand what are you trying to imply here, and I don't want to know either]

I destroyed the seal of Pandora's box.

[Is this perhaps about Misaki?]

I was patiently waiting for the next words coming out from Erisa. Those ten seconds that have passed since then felt dozens of times, no, hundreds of times longer in my perspective.

[Perhaps I rushed things?]

Despite the way she said that, it didn't seem she was reflecting on it at all.

Erisa turned her face towards Kanade who was standing near us

[Kanade, bring her here]

[Understood, Milady]

I was frozen after seeing the object that Kanade brought from the refrigerator and placed it on the table.

Over there was something that exceeded my worst expectations.

What was placed above that stainless table was Misaki's head which had turned more pale than wax.

[MISAKI!]

I involuntarily screamed and picked up that head.

I started thinking of the possibility of it being artificial.

However, the sensation transmitted to the palm of my hand was that of cold human skin and hair.

Both of her eyes were firmly closed, and her lips were slightly open as if she was

trying to whisper something.

[MISAKI! Misaki!]

Misaki's head didn't answer my constant calls.

While calling out her name for a short while, I became aware of her condition.

Misaki is dead.

[What the fuck is this!? What the heck is going on here?! How did she even end up this shape? Why only her head? It was you! Wasn't it?! You did this]

[Her death was an accident]

Erisa interrupted me with a calm voice.

[I reuse Misaki was a regular customer of mine, she was the only client who visited very often. Even when I don't talk about when or where I'm planning to set my stall, she still finds me every single time. As if she was looking for me. Sometimes I chose desolated places where people rarely walk by, and she still found me. Did she like flowers that much, or maybe meeting me was her goal, I couldn't tell]

I heard the sounds of meat being grilled and then realized that Kanade was preparing dinner without giving any concern to the matter.

[Did you know, on the night when you discovered my stall, just a little bit before, she told me this, "I want to meet you in a different place". The appointed place she chose was the new construction site near the suburb. Four days later, I went there while wondering what she needed from me]

I started calculating. Isazaki sent me the information about Misaki one week after I met Erisa, saying that he lost contact with her for three days. The puzzle pieces are coming together.

[At the time when I arrived, she was already crushed beneath the building materials. Did she collapse and fall off, or maybe the piled up material crumbled upon her, I'm not very sure. She lost a tremendous amount of blood and was breathing faintly]

[Breathing faintly? Why didn't you save her? Didn't you at least try to call an ambulance?]

When I suddenly stood up, Erisa shrugged her shoulders and began explaining.

[It was useless. Her head was fine, but her body was all demolished from getting squashed beneath the iron materials. It was certain that her leftover time was about to end. I gave up saving her and cut off her head to bring back with me]

[I can't understand your behavior. Why did you rip off her head then?]

[The main talk starts right now]

Hearing her quiet yet wicked and sharp voice, I ceased speaking.

[Regardless of the details, Iruse Misaki is now dead. And it is impossible for you to bring her back to this world unless a miracle happens. It is the same thing as trying to fix a broken egg by getting both the inside and the shell back together]

Erisa was peeking into my eyes with her black glassy pupils.

[However, what if you get a chance to go against God's divine providence? What will you do in that case?]

[Going against.....]

[You're pretty dense aren't you? I'm saying that there exists a way to resuscitate Misaki]

I lost my words.

Bringing back the dead to life? Is that even possible? I mean, we're not talking about the Monkey's Paw.

This is even worse than an immature girl who can't accept the death of someone and blindly believes of a way to bring them back to life. If she's speaking to me seriously, I think she already crossed the level of mere craziness.

[You probably don't believe me. Let me show you then, the way to revive the dead]

Erisa stood up, approached the vault enclosed by glass and invited me.

By switching on the light, the inside became apparent.

Two potted plants were lined up on the floor. The one on the right was a thirty centimeters long stalk with a considerable puff on its center, taking the form of a woman's upper half. Although it looked coarse as if it was shaved by a chisel, the eyes, the lined nose and lips were definitely those of a human. I could even see her collarbone, shoulders, small breasts and her two slender arms. The belly was

absorbed into the stalk.

I knew about the natural objects that take the form of humans and such, the pareidolia effect if I'm correct. But the plant in front me right now held too many details to the point where it could be confused with the real thing.

The one on the left took the shape of a grade school boy sitting while holding his knees and gazing at the space absent-mindedly. He's not wearing any clothes. From his closed thighs, his testes which looked like a peach were peeking out. At the top of his head, a brilliant flower petal was blooming like a spread scarf.

[Shishikuibana, that's the name of the plant]

[Plant? This child over here is a plant too?]

[That's right]

Erisa started talking to me who was dumbfoundedly observing the place.

[It's a species called as heterotrophic plants. Rather than photosynthesis, it feeds on outside organic matter to grow up. You can say they're the same as saprophytic plants if you want. The Shishikuibana changes to complex appearance when they mature.]

[Isn't that the same as the mandragora?]

Mandragora is a poisonous plant. Its toxic root that takes the shape of a human was formerly used as an anaesthesia or sleeping pills. It has even made an appearance in the Old Testament.

From its nature and outward appearance, it is said that it was used to suck up sinners blood as an execution method, or that it screams until death when extracted from the ground and much more other stories that were used as materials for fantasy novels.

Erisa silently shook her head.

[These plants here don't scream nor are they poisonous. They do look like humans from their appearance and feel, but that is all. They can't stand and walk, and they can't talk. All that they do is wander their sight vacantly while sitting in these pots all the time]

[They only look like humans for me though]

[You can try and touch them if you want]

Following her suggestion, I touched the boy on the left.

I felt soft thin hair growing on his tender skin. A weak temperature and pulse were transmitted to my hand as well. A sense of touching a real human body without a doubt.

[I wouldn't understand anything by just touching them. Rather, it only increases my doubt on whether they're really humans or not]

[The flower blooming at top of his head is proof enough that he's not a human. If you lightly stretch it, you will realize that the calyx is unified with the cranium. I planted this boy's seed four weeks ago. Since its hair and nails are already growing, it would usually seem like a naked child sitting on a pot for any outsider]

[By bringing Misaki back to life, you meant as a Shishikuibana?]

[Not exactly, but you did understand the idea]

That absurd nonsense Erisa was talking about only a few minutes ago had finally made sense to me now.

This is certainly a "rebirth".

However, not a perfect rebirth.

After all, it didn't reach the hope I had after hearing that I could bring her back to the living world.

[In other words, it's just a doll that takes on a human shape. In such a case, making a silicon figure resembling the corpse is much better]

[It is indeed better if you're aiming for a souvenir to keep around. You see, strictly speaking, the Shishikuibana is different from a doll. Whilst growing, its internal structure transformation closely resembles that of a human. Skin, blood, blood vessels, internal organs, bones, muscles. It possesses everything a human body could have. If you wound it, blood spouts out. A fully fledged life form. The only thing it lacks is will and intention]

[That last point makes it entirely different. No matter how close the appearance could get to a real one, it is still a doll. There's no meaning in reviving a person who wouldn't talk back to you when speaking to it]

[Did you already forgot about the lesson from The Monkey's Paw?]

Like a teacher who was at a loss by his disciple's wrong behavior, Erisa raised her

voice in shock.

[The fact that the son was resuscitated with an imperfect form was the compensation for making use of a miracle. If he turned back to his former shape, the world wouldn't be lacking peace and harmony right now. If you can turn left, you can't turn right. This world's various phenomena are all based on give-and-take relations. If you want to resuscitate her as a Shishikuibana, you need to abandon your mutual communication with her]

I want to bring back Misaki to life.

However, Erisa's suggested method grandly differs with the one I'm wishing for. I'm not interested in the least of making a doll reflecting her image.

But unfortunately, there's is no other way to bring her back to her earlier form. I once heard of a doctor who made a grotesque doll out of his lover's decomposed corpse, though, that wouldn't even be possible in her case. In the end, her head is already separated from the body which turned into a bloody lump of meat.

If I give in, Misaki will revive into an incomplete form.

If I don't give in, Misaki will be lost for eternity.

I wonder if either of these choices would satisfy me.

I wonder which choice would Misaki wish for me to take.

[How can I..... revive her?]

My ego decided on the conflict inside my head.

I wasn't ready to accept the abrupt death of Misaki.

[First thing you need, to raise a Shishikuibana, is to plant the seed]

Erisa indicated to the Shishikuibana's head with her index finger.

[.....In her brain. By making a hole in her skull]

[In her brain?!]

[Don't bring me those typical ethics like getting cursed by the dead. The brain is an indispensable seed-plot for the Shishikuibana. The seed sucks up the information accumulated in the brain in order to take a similar outward appearance of the corpse. Do you understand the reason I cut off Eruse Misaki's

head now?]

Erisa and I went back to those chairs and Misaki's head was placed on the stainless table.

[Let me confirm this, Mamesake Kuuya. After hearing out my explanation, are you willing to revive Iruse Misaki?]

[Yes, I do!]

My hesitation had disappeared.

[Does it mean that you will carry on any risk following this action?]

[What do you mean by risk?]

[Will you take any measures to bring her back, and never give her up? You can call it as resolution if that fits for you]

I wavered a little bit, but then strongly nodded. Erisa's expression merely changed into a one of relief.

[That's good, you finally made your resolve. I started thinking about what to do if you refused]

[Why would you think so? I mean, you had the intention to revive her from the beginning, didn't you? And in the case I didn't meet you I'd still be looking for Misaki right now you know?]

[I could've just revived her on my own, but the Shishikuibana's seed are precious. I can't just go on wasting them. So I am indeed thankful for your arrival]

[Then why did you cut off her-]

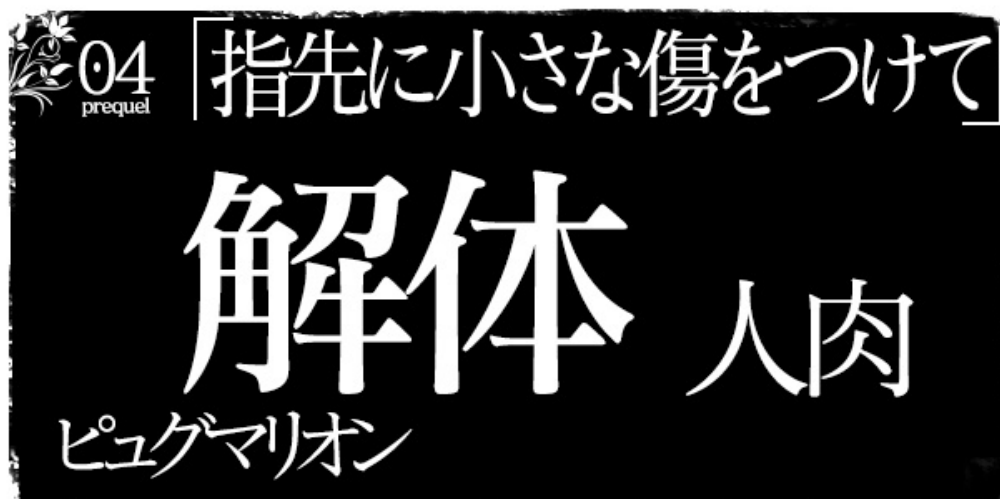
At that moment, my words were interrupted by the sound of someone knocking on the iron door.

Arrogantly, without the least consideration.

[We have an uninvited guest, the person who wastes these precious seeds]

Erisa disgorged those words with a troubled face.

Chapter 04



[scratch your finger tip]- dismantling- human flesh- Pygmalion

When Kanade opened the iron door, a young man wearing a black denim and dangle shirt entered the room.

Looking around his twenties apparently, with light brown hair, unshaven face and an expression aloof from the world, his image overlapped with Haruhito in my mind.

[Eh, did I interrupt something here?]

While not seeming to feel bad about it at all, the man said as such.

[Yes, you're in the way, every time. What do you need?]

[Greetings there, I just had a hard time bringing you some goods without borrowing any help from the Mogura ye' know? How about ye' thank me for that

at least?]

The man was grasping a long case from its handle.

[I'm not interested in some junk like the one brought to me last time]

[Don't be like that now. This time, I brought the real thing. Fresh quality goods]

By opening the case, a raw, sour, stinky smell struck my nose. Stored inside was a girl's body split into pieces. Bloody traces were standing out from the cut sections and her long hair was hiding her face.

[She's a runaway girl. Unfortunately, there was no information about her. I don't know her name nor her age. But hey, I found a sanitary napkin along with her, so it's fine right?]

[Oh my, you're a brute wearing human skin aren't you? Well, at least it's better than a suicide corpse you could pick from an abandoned building. The insides seem to be safe this time it seems]

Erisa leaned over the corpse and took its slender white arm.

[Her condition appears to be fine. Although, I'd prefer the blood to be extracted more]

Like a restaurant chef who is checking the quality of the market vegetables, Erisa inspected every single piece of the dead girl and brings her nose closer to it. I was about to lose control of my legs by seeing this unusually cruel scene in front of my eyes.

[By the way, who's that boy over there?]

The man pointed towards me who was standing still like a good-for-nothing pillar.

[The same as you, someone who's looking for seeds. He's a pretty brave boy who was searching for me at this time of night for the sake of his beloved girl]

[Wha-!?!]

My heart leaped up after she guessed my crush for Misaki.

[You thought I wouldn't know? It was too obvious; a woman is very sensitive to a man's glances, especially those that are holding a yearning towards them. Women who don't recognize such a glance are even scarcer than a protected species you know]

Hearing Erisa's unconcerned words, I started thinking of the possibility that Misaki had realized my feelings, and my brain suddenly got hotter.

[To top it off, he's trying to revive her, knowing that she already has a boyfriend. Honestly, I was touched by his pure conduct and decided to give him the seed for free this time]

['ey c'mon that's not fair~ I turned my bath into a blood ocean trying to dismantle the corpse here. Aren't ye' gonna acknowledge my efforts at least?]

The man said that in a dissatisfied manner.

[I can see you getting all spoiled if I do that. And either way, you are seeking seeds too much. Rather than a service, I'm thinking about charging you additional fees this time]

[As always, a cute face and a harsh personality. Just like a rose with steel thorns]

[I will accept your words as a compliment. The fact of being a rose doesn't change after all]

Erisa lightly parried the man's sarcastic words, fetched a small box from the vault and passed it to him.

[I'm fine dealing with you like this, but these seeds are very rare, don't go wasting them around]

[I know, I know...]

[You're in a good mood as usual, aren't you? I'm busy right now, if you don't have anything else to say, I'd like you to leave then]

[How cold of you. Guess I'm done over here, well then!]

Holding the box in his hands, the man left the room with a satisfied face. The room is left with me, Erisa, Kanade, and the blood covered marionette without strings.

[Who was that?]

[An upstart acting all tough. He's a nasty man. I feel sorry for the flowers raised by him]

Erisa said these words as if spitting out. However, her cold facial expression didn't change the least.

Despite being in this shop for only a short time, I already understood that Erisa doesn't show very much emotion or facial expressions, making me receive the impression as if she's a bisque doll imitating a human's behavior. Somehow, I can't imagine her face getting all red from anger or see her clapping her hands while roaring with laughter.

Erisa closed the case and called for Kanade.

[Take care of this after planting the seed in Iruse Misaki's head. retrieve the ovary, cut the meat and store it in the refrigerator]

[What should I do with the fingers? There are still many of them not used yet]

[Throw them away if there are too many]

[Understood, Milady]

While serving up the dish on a plate, Kanade answered with a broad smile. She wasn't disturbed at all by seeing a corpse in front of her eyes. The same face she made when delivering up Misaki's head, looking like a waitress serving us afternoon tea. It was evident that she was used to dealing with corpses in her daily life.

[What do you mean by taking care of it?]

[Peeling off the skin, removing the fat and separating the meat from the bones. That's all]

[I didn't ask you about your crafting skills. Why are you doing with that in the first place?]

[To make it edible of course... for me]

A plate of steak along with sauce was put in front of Erisa. The side options are asparagus and carrots. The slight smoke being raised from the plate reached my nose as a sweet smell.

[Excuse me now, I'm starving]

In an elegant manner, Erisa carried the meat to her mouth. While chewing, her lips were wiggling the steak and I was absent-mindedly gazing at her white neck where her faint throat swallowed the bite.

[I'd like you to stop staring at me when I'm eating. It's embarrassing]

Erisa's hands stopped moving because of my unreserved glance.

[What kind of meat....are you eating now?]

[The abdomen of a medium build man. A simple medium rare grilled steak with salt and pepper as a seasoning. Not grilling it too much gives it a uniquely delicious taste]

The pure-hearted girl was boldly explaining to me a human cooking recipe.

Behind her, the young maid was drilling a hole in Misaki's head while smiling.

[I'm not sure why are you doing that, but eating human flesh is...you know...not]

[Are you going to tell me that it is wrong to do so?]

Erisa asked me after drinking the mineral water filled in a glass cup.

[Could you explain to me why is it wrong?]

[Well, that's because.....yeah, the law...]

[There's no act that prohibits the consuming of human flesh in this country]

Erisa crushed down my likely answer.

[It is indeed quite impossible to obtain human meat without violating the law of killing a person and damaging their body, however, eating human flesh itself is not prohibited by law. There are some other countries which banned the act of eating human flesh, but those kind of laws that were taken from their own morals are not enough to restrain the desire of some people who want to eat it]

[But instead of human flesh, there are plenty of other kinds of meat, like cows or pigs]

[There is a significance in eating human flesh]

Erisa wiped off the sauce left in her mouth with a napkin.

[It is true that eating human flesh is considered as the greatest taboo for humanity. However, no basic explanation of the reason could be found. You must not hurt a person, you must not steal things that don't belong to you, you must not lie. People repeatedly learned about these sorts of taboos from their teachers and parents in their childhood, but no one taught them that eating human flesh is wrong. By getting rebuked for committing an error, the person understands that

what they did was wrong and throughout their days, they discover the society's norms and standards. By getting scolded for it, a strong negative impression is scorched in their hearts, and so, the next time, they behave without repeating the same mistake. However, there is no procedure used against the deed of eating human meat. In the end, you can't find a book explaining how to deal with a child who ate his friend's flesh]

That's true, if a teacher found out a kindergarten kid eating his friend, he would just be stunned instead of scolding him.

[By following the question of why is it wrong to eat human flesh, we will just run into another problem like, "is it good or bad to eat the flesh of living beings despite being able to live by eating plants". If we are going to consider it as a bad deed, then we can also just call those who eat bears or weasels as evil. To sum all of this up, it is adiaphora, a question without answer]

Erisa put down the knife and the fork.

[If killing people and eating their flesh wasn't a taboo, everyone would probably start to kill in order to eat. After all, humans are an existence that prefers to take the easiest choices]

The empty tableware was removed, and Misaki's head which was put into a small pot, was placed instead. Her face was slightly visible within the wood chips. A thirty centimeter hole was drilled in at the top of her head. I felt both sad and relieved by seeing her resting face.

[I'm going to have you carry back the pot with you. I wouldn't mind raising it until it takes a human shape, but doing that by your own hands from the beginning will spring up attachment between you, wouldn't it?]

[But wait, how am I supposed to do that? should I just give her water?]

[It grows by drinking blood. But not as much as you think. Just scratch a finger tip and dribble a few drops a day. When she develops a face, you can make her suck on your fingers. There are some people who're addicted to this kind of stimulation you know]

[And how much should I give her?]

[Only a small amount is enough. An amount much lower than what you give in a blood donation]

[Is that the risk you told me about earlier?]

[No way]

[Then what is this risk?]

[Slowly, but surely, you will realize it. Soon enough]

[Mr.Mamesaki, here..]

Kanade handed me a small army knife.

[I'm giving that to you. When you don't feel like seeing her face anymore, don't think about reclaiming. The roots will suck up the moisture and start growing everywhere]

I got chills just just by imagining a few roots growing out from her eyes and mouth. I'd do anything to avoid seeing Misaki in such a condition.

[I will be escorting him now. I'm leaving the rest to you]

[Understood. Farewell, Mr.Mamesaki]

By the time I got into the car again, the rain had already stopped falling. On our way back, the road was full of puddles and the tires were splashing water while moving. With the car pushing its way in the darkness, we leisurely aimed to the district where I live.

[A displeased deed by the Pygmalion]

Erisa's sudden words broke the silence.

[Who?]

[A Greek myth about a sculptor. A miserable man who fell in love with his sculpture and wished for it to turn into a human. In his case, that wish was granted out of sympathy by Aphrodite. But you'd better understand that a goddess's mood wouldn't descend upon everyone who's praying for it]

[What do you mean by that?]

[Realize your stature, and don't desire too much. That's the meaning]

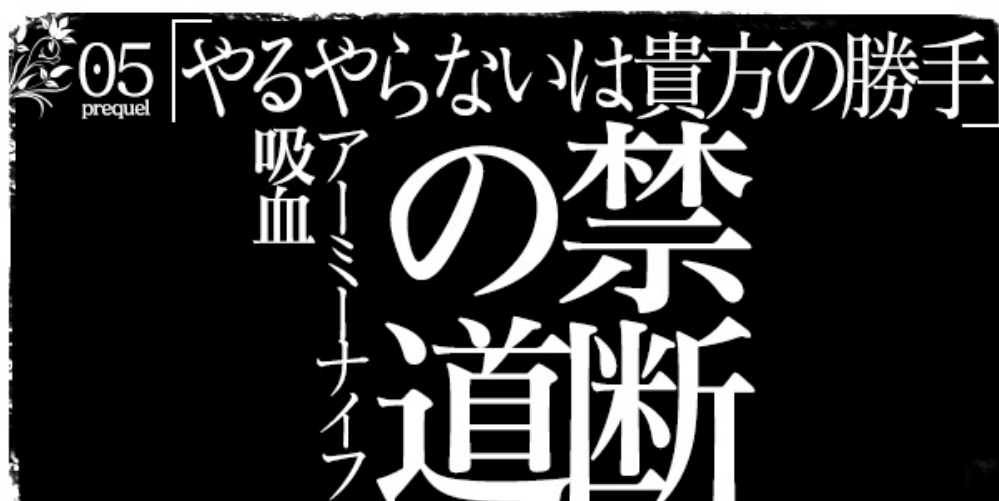
While I was trying to understand Erisa's strange words, the care halted in the entrance of the flower quarter. The light of the lined up night stores had already disappeared and the district had fallen into a peaceful silence. It didn't take even ten minutes for us to arrive.

[Well then, we shall meet again]

Erisa went back, leaving a short salute behind.

Without having the composure to see her off, I ran towards a light pole by the roadside and started vomiting. By the time I finished disgorging everything in my stomach, I did not realize that she purposely obscured a very important bit of information from me.

Chapter 05



It is for you to choose- blood absorption- knife- The prohibited path

Two weeks after I took charge of the Shishikuibana....Misaki, I was called by Erisa on a late-morning. This is the third time I'm meeting her.

Standing below the sunshine, her beauty did not change in the least. Her clear white skin was bouncing back the sunlight increasing her brilliance. Standing in this hot weather, she was the only person that felt like she doesn't belong to this world.

[I want you to meet someone]

I was brought to an old residential area.

After making it through a series of hedges and block walls full of moss here and there, we finally arrived at an old fashioned isolated house. The garden was full of withered grass and bushes, but what gave me the strongest impression as if I

stepped in the wrong place, was the brilliant hydrangea in the summit of their blooming. The name carved in the doorplate burned by the sun heat was Arisu.

The moment Erisa ringed the bell, a middle-aged woman came to receive us.

[Oh my, Miss Jinka, what could be the matter?]

[I thought I'd visit and check the situation]

[And, who may this person be?]

Arisu released a suspicious glance towards me.

[My new assistant. I brought him with me for practical training]

[Is that so. Well then, please come in]

Completely believing the imprudent lie Erisa had bluffed, Arisu started lining up slippers inside.

While the house was pretty neat, there was not a single sign of decoration or refinement. A house made for the sole purpose of residing in. Cardboard and clothing cases were piled up in the narrow corridor. Although some hints of living in could be noticed everywhere, personal dispositions and valuable things couldn't be seen at all.

[I will be bringing my husband now]

We were guided to a living room with a solid wood carved low table and cheap looking dressers occupying most of the space. The woman went to the inner room.

[Leaving aside the random speech earlier, what did you want to show me?]

I whispered to Erisa next to me.

[I thought it is the suitable time. I mean, you will start pondering about your future actions soon enough, in any case]

[And what do you mean by the suitable time?]

My question remained hanging due to the door's sliding sound.

Arisu walked in while carrying her husband from both his arms.

[Even if it's just a fingertip, I couldn't bring myself to wound it, so I gave him the blood of a stray cat I caught instead]

Arisu placed the pot on the table.

A forty centimeter stalk was puffed out taking the form of a slender man featuring a fastidious facial expression. His approximate age was the same as his wife, Arisu. Thin white lines were running all over his body.

[It looks like he was raised in a favorable condition]

Erisa changed her sight from the Shishikuibana towards Arisu.

[Did you make your decision yet?]

[No, I'm satisfied with this for the time being]

[If you're content with the current situation, then your choice is correct. That way, you wouldn't have to be burdened with any more unnecessary stuff]

I was hearing out Erisa and Arisu's riddle-like exchange while keeping silent the entire time. Sometimes, I caught the word of a forty-one-day old body mixed in the conversation. It seems that not too much time has passed since the death of her husband. After staying inside for twenty minutes, we took our leave from the Arisu house.

Erisa and I went back our way below the dazzling sun rays. She didn't use her car today saying, "My legs would dull if I don't walk every once in awhile.". The small rattle basket she was holding in her hand was shaking in synchronization with her steps.

[Despite her looks, she is in her early forties]

Walking on the street, Erisa said as such.

[Her husband fell into a massive debt due to his business failure and was overworking himself until the end to make it up. One day he had a heart attack and did not rise anymore. Trying to sustain the household economy, it seems he made her go through a lot as well, which kind of explains her fast aging]

[Even so, she was deeply in love with him to the point where she resuscitated him as a Shishikuibana in order to stay together]

[Did it seem that way for you?]

[Am I wrong?]

Erisa floated a wicked smile.

[On the contrary, she deeply detested her husband. He fell into depression because of his downfall and cleared it away by blaming everything on her. For her, it was probably something unbearable. Far from being thankful for her devotion, he even used her as a vent for stress relief. She was constantly in fear from his tyrannical rage]

[Why did she turn him into a Shishikuibana then?]

[For the sake of the revenge she couldn't fulfill in his lifetime. For her to secretly put his headless body in the coffin and to choose an immediate burial, she should have harbored quite the grudge towards him]

[By revenge, what does it specifically mean?]

[By looking at her husband, didn't you notice something?]

Erisa referred to the small wounds in his body.

[Every time she gives her husband blood, she wounds his skin with a knife. Since he's grown to this level, his body fluid composition is not much different from real blood, and so she's making him taste pain as a human. The reason I visited her today was to check whether she went too far with it or not. She will continue carving him until she either clears away her resentment entirely, or he stops regenerating one day. I wonder which one would come first]

That man....no, that Shishikuibana is kept alive for the sole intent of damaging it.

In my case, I'm raising Misaki just because I want her to be with me.

Leaving aside the common point which is the Shishikuibana, I thought that I would never cross the same path Arisu did.

[Humans possess both love and hate. Their allocations may differ from person to person, but both of them equally exist]

Erisa said that as if she read my thoughts.

[Kuuya, what would be the reason for pursuing Iruse Misaki in your case?]

[Well, that is...]

Erisa struck me with a teasing glance while I was faltering to give her an answer.

[It's fine if you don't answer. As long as you don't lose sight of the emotions you're holding for her]

During our conversation, we ran into a public park near a kindergarten.

Young children were raising shrill voices and playing while their mothers were having fun talks sitting on the distant benches.

A gift from the break of the rainy season, a peaceful late-morning scene that makes you yawn.

[Let's take a little rest]

Erisa sat on a blue bench near the entrance. I sat next to her as well. Glittering sunlight made its way through the gap of the poplar branches and leaves, and the occasional crossing breeze gently stroked my moistened shirt making me feel even more comfortable.

[Kanade handed it to me when I was about to leave. Is it fine?]

Erisa took half a sandwich from the basket and bit into it without waiting for my affirmation. The sound of biting into a fresh lettuce leisurely reached my ears.

[It's a Panini made from the meat of that dismembered girl you saw before. This time, I'm using her splénus, the part that connects her head and back together]

Without giving much concern to her unappetizing recipe explanation, I went straight to inquire Erisa.

[I want to bring back Misaki as a human]

Instead of returning those words to me, Erisa fixed her gaze on my face.

[I want to restore her to her former shape, just like that boy you showed me in your shop. Tell me the way to do it]

[As expected. I was right about the time]

I was finally able to understand the meaning of, "the suitable time", which Erisa declared a while ago.

Misaki's growth was going favorably.

The next day after planting it, the seed had quickly sprouted. Three days later, it had grown by twenty centimeters and start taking a human shape. Since the plant's growth was extremely fast, I found myself watching over her development all day long, forgetting about leaving for the library. There is the saying that, "a watched pot never boils". However, this proverb does not apply to her. I didn't release my sight from Misaki.

In the evening of the fifth day, Misaki's familiar face started taking its shape. Her face didn't reach ten centimeters with her eyelashes and eyebrows weakly growing up, but her facial features were clearly distinguished. I wounded my fingertip with a knife and pressed it against her lips like I was teasing her for a kiss, then she started sucking the blood similar to a baby sucking on his mother's breast.

Misaki is drinking blood.

My own blood.

Her body is absorbing the blood and incorporating it with its' own.

For Misaki, my blood is an indispensable beverage for her to come back to the present word.

I was entranced by this feeling that gave me a sensation similar to having sexual relations with her.

By the seventh day, the stalk extended and puffed out more and more until her upper half came into sight.

The lower part starting from her hips was still connected with the stalk, but the upper body grew to look exactly like that of a young woman. Long and thin tissues were gathering on her head instead of hair and an almond shaped flower bud rose on its top. I kept making the forty centimeters long Misaki drink my blood while shaking from the sensation of her biting my finger every time.

However, these blessed days did not last too long.

Misaki stopped growing any further while continuing to drink my blood, looking no different from a doll.

The taste of cooked white rice is exceptional when being hungry, but gradually, white rice started to become unsatisfying for me. I want side dishes, my tongue wants something with a strong flavor, I want a sweet and delicious dessert after my meals. Every time I fulfill a desire of mine, a new one wells up.

To sum it up, I gradually became hard to satisfy.

I recalled the Shishikuibana boy in Erisa's shop.

I doubted whether if blood is the only thing necessary for him to grow up to that extent, but now that Misaki has stopped developing, the answer became apparent.

Blood is probably not enough for a Shishikuibana to mature.

At the time I thought about contacting Erisa to ascertain my doubts, she called for me instead. Of course, I accepted her perfectly clocked invitation.

[Since it's already been two weeks now, a flower bud should have grown on her head, am I correct?]

[It's neither blooming nor showing a signs of withering away]

[Even if you leave it like that, it won't bloom. There's a necessary condition for it to do so]

[Condition?]

[You need to change the feed you're giving it. I have already told you before that the Shishikuibana doesn't create its own nutrients. It requires an organic matter externally. Although blood could be sufficient for it to keep on living, it still needs a different feed in order to take a complete form]

As I thought. However, I can feel something triggering in her words.

[That's a weird term. Isn't it usually called as fertilizer rather than a feed for plants?]

[That is if the Shishikuibana was a common plant. And you're quite aware that it's not, aren't you?]

She's not wrong. A normal plant wouldn't take the form of a human and doesn't drink blood. It doesn't use a person's brain as a seed-plot either.

[And so, what could this feed be?]

Erisa held up the Panini she was biting in.

[This]

Human flesh.

Not only Erisa, but even the Shishikuibana eats human flesh.

[Originally, it was my father who started the cultivation of the Shishikuibana. He was quite a dilettante person and spent an enormous amount of money for the sake of his occultic hobbies along with his work. For such a father, discovering the rumors of Shishikuibana was inevitable]

Erisa stopped talking and bit into the Panini.

[He skimmed over every ancient document and archive until he learned of the existence of the plant and found a way to manufacture the seed. However, regarding the basic cultivation method, the only thing that was mentioned was drinking blood. Even so, the Shishikuibana was able to develop into a human form, which was enough to satisfy my father's ambitions, in the beginning.....]

Erisa lifted her right hand and pointed to the sky with her index finger.

[But it gradually started to become unsatisfying for him. The same as you right now. My father thought that increasing the amount of the given blood would result in a further growth, then gravely wounded his finger to advance the bleeding. And as you would expect, his finger's recovery couldn't keep up with this daily activity. My father's finger became torn off with blood constantly dripping down. To the point where he didn't need an ink pad for a thumb print anymore]

He bent his finger.

[One day, my father bit off his finger. At that time, the flesh was all bare allowing the Shishikuibana to sense its smell. I guess it should be obvious now, that the Shishikuibana's name originated from its' eating habits.]

By hearing Erisa's story, a cold chill ran down my spine. Maybe if she didn't tell me all of this, I'd be walking down the same path her father did.

[For my father, this accident was like the first rain after a drought. The flower started blooming, and the Shishikuibana had a sudden growth. My father was very delighted by seeing this drastic transfiguration]

[Delighted? Even though he bit off his finger? This might be rude out of me but, your father is a strange person]

[This suggests how serious and eager he was with the Shishikuibana's cultivation. Since the day he knew that the plant requires meat to grow, he commenced his

long series of trial and error. Starting with pig, with cows and chickens next, then continuing with a deer, bear, horse, duck, whale, rabbit, dog, cat, raccoon, crocodile, snake, lizard, frog, turtle and every other animal you could think of. Despite trying all of them, the Shishikuibana didn't react at all. And when he finally arrived at the correct answer, which is human flesh, his fingers had already decreased to seven. My father had literally sacrificed his body to leave behind a journal featuring the cultivation method, to which I am using currently. You can say that the fact you are keeping Iruse Misaki's plant right now is thanks to my father's fingers]

[Isn't there a different way for the Shishikuibana to mature without having to eat human flesh?]

[Unfortunately, there isn't. The conduct of the people entranced by the Shishikuibana are generally the same. They get unsatisfied with the flower, and they're then entangled in the dilemma of whether they should cross the prohibited path or remain clinging onto their humanity. Although, based on my own experience, most of them make the former choice]

I stared at my hand and began ruminating on the story of Erisa's father.

Misaki wants me to give her both my blood and flesh. I wonder how far I should cut myself just to bring her back to a human shape. Merely by imagining the knife blade cutting deep into my finger, my whole hand started itching.

[Obtaining human meat is not an easy task. However, even if that's the case, thinking about giving her your own flesh is a foolish choice. The Shishikuibana is surprisingly gluttonous. If you keep on giving it what it desires, not even cutting your four limbs would be enough]

Erisa interrupted my thoughts as if she saw through them.

[There is no need for you to offer it yourself. In the first place, if you tore off your entire body, you wouldn't be able to appreciate the Shishikuibana later]

I understood what Erisa was trying to imply.

If I want to resuscitate Misaki perfectly, I'm going to need to acquire another person's corpse. A corpse I could offer it for her.

For me right now, the only way to obtain human flesh is by relying on one person.

[Could you share some of the meat you have at your store with me?]

[I don't have the resolution to continue fulfilling your sprouting desires anymore.

In other words, I can't do that]

Erisa coldly refused after stuffing the last bite of the panini in her cheeks.

[I am not so soft to the point where I would help you get an easy result. Human flesh is a valuable thing for me. I wouldn't just go and offer it to you for free. If you want her to stay with you, then it is necessary to taint your own hands for her sake. The ridiculous wish to raise a Shishikuibana without carrying any risks until the end is the same as a cat who wishes to catch a fish without soaking his leg in water]

[Could you at least give me a hint about a way to acquire it? Leaving me to step inside an unknown world alone is too much you know]

[It's your choice whether you will be stepping in or not. But still, if you're inquiring for some advice, I can give you some. Although their execution is up to you]

Erisa moved her face closer and lowered her voice.

Exactly like a demon trying to tempt a human.

[The measures don't matter. You can just kill someone, search for the corpse of a person who committed suicide, or collect the scattered remains of a traffic accident victim. There is even the choice of sneaking into a morgue or a funeral hall, however, I wouldn't recommend this one for you]

[Leaving aside the recommendations, all of them are impossible for me]

[If you think like that, then it will indeed become impossible. As long as you have the resolution, there's no need for physical strength nor special skills. All that's left is luck and timing. If you successfully obtain a corpse contact me. Although it would cost you a decent price, at least I can take care of the body recovery and dismantling]

I shook my head.

[If it's about money, I can't pay it. I'm just a freeloading Ronin after all]

[I am not talking about money. It's about half of the corpse]

[Half of it?! Your extravagant prices don't only apply to flowers, do they?]

Erisa somehow made a disappointed expression.

[In that case, you can make it on your own. If you can]

I couldn't even find an excuse against her heavy argument.

No matter how I struggle on my own, it was quite clear that I will find myself relying on her at the very end.

It's regrettable but, that's reality.

[It's up to your own convenience whether you ask me or not. All that I did was show you the way. No matter what kind of result is waiting for you, it's your own responsibility. If you do not like any of these choices, then just throw away the Shishikuibana, along with your resolve. I wouldn't blame you if you did so. It is much more of a relief than getting crushed by your distress]

Leaving those merciless words behind, Erisa left the park. Bluntly, as if she had finished a hard task.

The "risk" that I heard of when I took in Misaki for the first time, along with what Erisa mentioned just earlier was overburdening me. An excessively large weight I could not carry on with a half-hearted resolution.

Sitting still on the bench, I remained gazing at the peaceful scenery in front of me until I gathered enough energy to stand up.

The sight of the active children playing and their mothers watching over them.

Perhaps if one of those kids' lives were to be abruptly lost, their mothers would wish for them to come back to life even if it means stepping out of humanity's path.

After I spent an hour sitting on the bench lost in thoughts, I eventually went back home with a low spirit.

I entered my room, wounded my unrecovered finger again, and gave it to Misaki to suck on.

I wonder if I can remain satisfied by just giving her my blood.

Or maybe, she will end up eating my finger after it gets ripped by the frequent wounding one day.

While pondering over different worries, I sustained my gaze towards Misaki.

Shishikuibana: in the original novel, it's writing in katakana, which doesn't really give a clear idea about the meaning. But if it was to be written in kanji, it should

be like this: “肉食花” meaning the meat-eating flower.

Chapter 06



[he could just eat the kid]- God's forgiveness-body

On the night of the next day I met Erisa, I was roaming around the town.

After I had spent a long night lost in thought, I was finally able to conclude that “continuing to deceive myself was no longer possible.” As I wished from the very beginning, I want to resuscitate Misaki to her perfect shape. In order to make this desire feasible, cutting down a copse and extracting its flesh is necessary. I left the idea of offering her my fingers as the final measure to take.

However, having no idea about a way to accomplish such an unachievable mission, I just kept wandering around without any actual plan.

In the first place, a human corpse is not something you'd conveniently find rolling on the road, nor is it something that is sold so conveniently in public. There's no way a miracle like some sort of serial murderer visiting my house and offering me a corpse as a present would occur either. Even if I was lucky enough to witness a

murdering accident while passing by, I'm not very sure if I could snatch away the body before the police or the ambulance arrive. A person's death is usually concealed until the end.

I choose to circle silent alleys and abandoned buildings with less traffic nearby, but far from finding a corpse, I couldn't even notice a single finger around.

I tried moving according to Erisa's advice and followed the railway while checking if something unexpected could be seen, but again, it was all in vain.

I recalled the talk about the dangle shirt man picking a suicide corpse near an abolished building in the outskirt and went excitedly there to give it a try too, however, all that I found was a large ground full of overgrown grass with not even a single rat roaming around.

[As I thought, there's no way I can find a corpse]

Losing all hopes, I went to a lonely public park located between the buildings and sat on its swing. The park's dazzling lamp lights were illuminating this worn out place. A bit further away from this light circle, I noticed a group of crude residences made from pipes and blue sheeting. It's probably the community of the homeless people separated from the town area, and this park as well, is yet nothing but a single part of this community.

A loose sigh passed from my lips.

I wonder what I am doing at such a place. Searching for a corpse with no strategy or knowledge is like I'm searching for a sunken ship in the middle of a desert.

My fruitless effort resulted in a languish feeling hanging on my back.

Whenever I got the urge to throw away everything and give up, I remembered Misaki inside my closet.

If I give up, Misaki will stay in that shape forever.

She doesn't have the ability to revive herself alone after she was given a chance to come back to this world. It is my duty to accomplish this mission. I'm the only person who could clasp her hand and pull her up to the ground from the spider thread she is clinging on at the current moment.

However, what am I supposed to do to achieve this task?

My five senses which were driven by irritation had suddenly sharpened.

I felt something was inside the copse near the park.

It is kind of difficult to describe this feeling. Maybe something like a sixth sense would be appropriate to say.

The only thing I had was a presentiment telling me that I will reach my goal if I entered that place.

As if I was reeling in an invisible thread, I slowly walked towards the copse.

Far away from the light emanating from the roadway, I advanced inside the dark forest while being careful not to trip from the jugged roots of the trees.

After my eyes gradually became accustomed to the darkness, I noticed someone's shadowy figure a few meters away.

That figure's aspect was quite strange.

It was floating in the air without moving at all.

By freezing my sight and looking closely, the shadowy figure started to become apparent.

A hanging head watching the ground and feeble drooping limbs.

The rope tied around his neck was dangling from the tree's branch.

In front of my eyes was a man's hanging corpse.

My mind cracked up after witnessing the sudden appearance of a formerly living person. I tried turning back, but reason seized my ankles.

I'm not going to achieve anything if I run away. Just recall what you were doing just now. I was roaming around in the night town searching for a corpse, right? I couldn't find anything and was about to give up, right? And when I decided to enter this forest on a whim, here I discover an unexpected corpse hanging in front of my eyes! Divine grace, a one in a lifetime chance has descended upon me. There's no way I would let it go. All right, let's draw out some courage and-

Turning my sight back, I perceived several human figures gathering around the corpse.

There are five of them at most, all possessing a short height and wearing tattered clothes. As for their facial features and bodies, I wasn't able to grasp them completely in such a situation.

No, actually they were six of them. The last one climbed the tree with a monkey's agility and was cutting the dangling rope.

All of them were standing still nearby, seeming to pay no attention to me. The sound of the knife cutting the rope meekly resounded in the copse.

Soon after the rope was cut and the corpse fell, the five other figures instantly caught it in the air.

One of them took out a bag from his pocket and quickly stuffed the corpse inside.

Just like those stagehands taking care of the stage scenery during an intermission, they quickly carried away the body without faltering for even a moment.

Before I realized it, the mysterious human figures disappeared from my field of vision.

All that was left were the dense trees and thick overgrown grass blended into the night, with me who was showing a stupefied expression while standing alone.

Even if I cleared my ears, the sound of the breeze shaking the tree leaves was the only thing I heard.

I turned back and tried to run away.

Hoping wholeheartedly to leave this place as fast as possible, I eagerly moved my limbs which were barely reacting as I want.

I was entranced by a feeling as if those people were pursuing me, and kept running through the abandoned buildings leaving behind the homeless community and choosing a road with the most traffic and people.

Leaving aside the feeling of being victimized by having the corpse snatched away from me, all what I thought about was my good luck for not directing their attention towards me.

When I finally regained my reason, I had already got on the train, cramped within the people's breath and warmth.

By the time I got down to the nearest station, my fear had considerably calmed down. However, I couldn't help but feel downhearted. For the first time, the obscene scenery of the flower district felt kind and gentle as if it was welcoming my cowardly self back.

I went back home, directly entered the living room and lied down on the sofa.

Recalling the earlier event which I already became unable to distinguish whether it was a dream or reality, my heart started to break up.

I had no idea about who those people were, nor what were they doing in that copse, but one thing in my mind was for sure, and that is the idea of not wishing to meet them ever again.

Realizing my uncovered cowardliness and fear, I felt useless and a deep sigh slipped from my mouth.

[I don't know what happened but, don't let it get to you. Eat food and stay in spirit!]

The person who noticed me all dejected and was trying to cheer me up using awkward Japanese was a woman named Rosari. That's indeed a name that gives the impression of a young noble woman, but in actual truth, this Rosari who's grilling a hamburger steak for me in the kitchen is just a normal woman with darkish skin. It's pretty hard to call her beautiful since she possesses the looks of both a frog and a pigeon. However, her culinary skills are high class. I haven't yet seized the standards Haruhito is using to choose a woman for my cooking duty, which makes the risk way too big, but this time it seems he picked the right person.

Haruhito went for a trip to collect information two days ago. Thanks to that, I can now freely wander anywhere and anytime I feel like it. However, Haruhito will eventually come back, and I need to consider what to do at that time. I shouldn't let anybody discover the grown up Misaki in my room.

While eating the hamburger steak Rosari made for me, the TV news was talking about a parent and child who were rejected from the livelihood protection, passing away from hunger. It was said that when they discovered the bodies, no essential utensils were around and all that was inside the refrigerator was some oxidized mayonnaise.

In this country, more than ten million tons of food supplies are disposed of before reaching the dinner table. Even so, people who don't obtain a single piece of bread and starve to death still exist. How ridiculous.

[If he was hungry he could just eat the kid]

Rosari who was sitting in front of me on the table, released some unbelievable words while looking unconcerned.

[Does such a disturbing habit exist in your home country?]

[Selling blood, selling hair, selling internal organs because of poverty is normal. But no eating a child, God would not allow it]

[Then why did you say he should eat the child then?]

[Do not kill him. If he die alone, he can eat him. If he can stay alive by eating him, God will permit it]

Hearing Rosari's opinion full of hand gestures, I remembered the accident of the plane with forty passengers that crashed in the mountains when it was flying to South America. Sixteen of them returned alive after surviving a long while in an extreme situation on the high mountains, depending on only small provisions for food. However, it was confirmed that they resorted to eating the diseased flesh of their own to make it this far. An incident that confused the whole world. There was even a devoted Christian among them who said: "their souls have already separated from their bodies and are departing towards God. Their remains are nothing but mere flesh". And after confessing their act to a Catholic church, the answer was: "If no different measures existed to survive except for eating a passing person's flesh, then nobody would blame you for that conduct, and there is no need to worry about it". In other words, the church's opinion implied that there was no necessity to ask for God's forgiveness.

Perhaps this is what Rosari was trying to say, even though I'm entirely against it. Despite it being an indispensable act to remain alive, human flesh is still human flesh.

Erisa considered "cannibalism" as something to not deeply analyze and judge. But still, I do think there's a certain line that a person shouldn't cross.

[There are people who eat human meat in Japan. There are even people who make others eat their own meat]

[Making others eat their own flesh?]

When I asked back without holding my astonishment, Rosari started talking about her personal experience.

[It's a story about when I still was in Yokohama]

Back then, she was working in a brothel. Her job was to receive the order from customers, head to the appointed room and offer them a sexual service. I recall Haruhito mentioning something about it being established in some places unknown to ordinary people. A type of occupation that doesn't cease of troubles with the customers.

Rosari's appointed client this time, was a wealthy man in the prime of life. He was wearing some high-class clothes and held a kind personality, indeed a gentleman. The man was pleased with Rosari and began nominating her every fifteen days.

On the fifth appointment, he instead called her to his mansion rather than the usual hotel.

[It was very wide and very pretty. I felt jealous and was thinking if only I lived in such a lovely place]

When she was washing his body in the bathroom, the man assembled his resolved and decided to break the ice.

–Can you eat my body today?

[I was surprised. I told him no, blood will come out. It's okay, I will call a doctor. And you see, a razor was in the bathroom]

In front of Rosari who was firmly denying his request, the man took the razor and started slicing the flesh of his palm. While letting out a cold sweat and continuously groaning, he proudly raised his bloodstained hand towards Rosari and cut off a part of his palm.

Do you want it to be sauteed? Or maybe you prefer it completely fried?

The man was trying his best to bring out a smile while hiding the pain and the exposed bone in the deep wound of his hand.

Without answering nor wiping her body, Rosari left the shower, quickly wore her clothes and ran away from the mansion.

[After that, he called me very often, but I told the staff "no no". They should not answer him]

Rosari made a cross with her fingers. From that day, she requested the staff not to accept a nomination from a pervert gentlemen anymore.

[It's weird. What is good about making someone eat your meat? What is enjoyable in making painful memories? If he only asked me to eat beef or pork, I'd happily answer yes!]

Looking at Rosari who was arguing with passion, I felt a huge envy for her past situation.

I earnestly wished for someone to appear before me and offer his flesh as well.

Because of Rosari's strange story, I had a weird dream that night.

I am sitting at the kitchen table.

Not in the old geisha house.

It's the house where I used to live with my parents.

My mother made a dish and lined up several plates on the table.

The main dish was a hamburger steak along with cheese on top of it.

My mother's special recipe.

When I was about to reach for the steak with my fork, I noticed something.

Hey mom, where's your right arm?

You told me you want to eat a hamburger.

I was satisfied by my mother's answer after witnessing her gentle smile.

That's right, mom chopped her right arm for my sake.

While having a friendly chat with my mother, I started eating her home cooking.

The hamburger made from my mother's flesh was so sweet and its flavor remained on my tongue.

Mom, this hamburger is too sweet.

Did I perhaps put too much sugar?

You forget things easily, don't you mom?

My mother smiled.

I do forget things easily, Mom is ashamed of herself.

I was confused and used Kuuya's hand instead of mine in this hamburger after all.

The fork I was holding with my right hand fell off.

After waking up, I kept lying in bed for a while reflecting on this dream.

Was that really just a dream?

The setting had an awful déjà vu feeling following them.

I am pretty sure I have already experienced that scene.

The times where we were eating at the same table, and having a friendly chat.

Of course, both of us weren't one handed.

Those blessed, brief moments full of happiness I shared with my mother remained in my memories for as long as I can remember.

However, at the same time, something in my mind screamed that such a memory didn't occur.

Thinking back again, I recall that my mother was very cold towards me when I was still a child. Whenever I wanted to be spoiled and drew near her, she cruelly brushed my hands away. For me, my mother wasn't someone who would gently pat my head, she was an existence who didn't bring me anything but pain and loneliness.

My mother loathed me. I became aware of that fact not very long after I was born. I didn't understand why she frankly directed those emotions towards me until she passed away. No, I still don't know even after she did.

My dream mother filled me with her gentle smile, to the point where calling it a simple vision would be too easy.

And when did she direct that smile towards me in reality? Was it beautiful? Was it really that gentle? As I thought, I can't recall my mother's face.

On the night of the next day I met Erisa, I was roaming around the town.

After I had spent a long night lost in thought, I was finally able to conclude that "continuing to deceive myself was no longer possible." As I wished from the very beginning, I want to resuscitate Misaki to her perfect shape. In order to make this desire feasible, cutting down a copse and extracting its flesh is necessary. I left the idea of offering her my fingers as the final measure to take.

However, having no idea about a way to accomplish such an unachievable mission, I just kept wandering around without any actual plan.

In the first place, a human corpse is not something you'd conveniently find rolling on the road, nor is it something that is sold so conveniently in public. There's no way a miracle like some sort of serial murderer visiting my house and offering me a corpse as a present would occur either. Even if I was lucky enough to witness a

murdering accident while passing by, I'm not very sure if I could snatch away the body before the police or the ambulance arrive. A person's death is usually concealed until the end.

I choose to circle silent alleys and abandoned buildings with less traffic nearby, but far from finding a corpse, I couldn't even notice a single finger around.

I tried moving according to Erisa's advice and followed the railway while checking if something unexpected could be seen, but again, it was all in vain.

I recalled the talk about the dangle shirt man picking a suicide corpse near an abolished building in the outskirt and went excitedly there to give it a try too, however, all that I found was a large ground full of overgrown grass with not even a single rat roaming around.

[As I thought, there's no way I can find a corpse]

Losing all hopes, I went to a lonely public park located between the buildings and sat on its swing. The park's dazzling lamp lights were illuminating this worn out place. A bit further away from this light circle, I noticed a group of crude residences made from pipes and blue sheeting. It's probably the community of the homeless people separated from the town area, and this park as well, is yet nothing but a single part of this community.

A loose sigh passed from my lips.

I wonder what I am doing at such a place. Searching for a corpse with no strategy or knowledge is like I'm searching for a sunken ship in the middle of a desert.

My fruitless effort resulted in a languish feeling hanging on my back.

Whenever I got the urge to throw away everything and give up, I remembered Misaki inside my closet.

If I give up, Misaki will stay in that shape forever.

She doesn't have the ability to revive herself alone after she was given a chance to come back to this world. It is my duty to accomplish this mission. I'm the only person who could clasp her hand and pull her up to the ground from the spider thread she is clinging on at the current moment.

However, what am I supposed to do to achieve this task?

My five senses which were driven by irritation had suddenly sharpened.

I felt something was inside the copse near the park.

It is kind of difficult to describe this feeling. Maybe something like a sixth sense would be appropriate to say.

The only thing I had was a presentiment telling me that I will reach my goal if I entered that place.

As if I was reeling in an invisible thread, I slowly walked towards the copse.

Far away from the light emanating from the roadway, I advanced inside the dark forest while being careful not to trip from the juttied roots of the trees.

After my eyes gradually became accustomed to the darkness, I noticed someone's shadowy figure a few meters away.

That figure's aspect was quite strange.

It was floating in the air without moving at all.

By freezing my sight and looking closely, the shadowy figure started to become apparent.

A hanging head watching the ground and feeble drooping limbs.

The rope tied around his neck was dangling from the tree's branch.

In front of my eyes was a man's hanging corpse.

My mind cracked up after witnessing the sudden appearance of a formerly living person. I tried turning back, but reason seized my ankles.

I'm not going to achieve anything if I run away. Just recall what you were doing just now. I was roaming around in the night town searching for a corpse, right? I couldn't find anything and was about to give up, right? And when I decided to enter this forest on a whim, here I discover an unexpected corpse hanging in front of my eyes! Divine grace, a one in a lifetime chance has descended upon me. There's no way I would let it go. All right, let's draw out some courage and-

Turning my sight back, I perceived several human figures gathering around the corpse.

There are five of them at most, all possessing a short height and wearing tattered clothes. As for their facial features and bodies, I wasn't able to grasp them completely in such a situation.

No, actually they were six of them. The last one climbed the tree with a monkey's agility and was cutting the dangling rope.

All of them were standing still nearby, seeming to pay no attention to me. The sound of the knife cutting the rope meekly resounded in the copse.

Soon after the rope was cut and the corpse fell, the five other figures instantly caught it in the air.

One of them took out a bag from his pocket and quickly stuffed the corpse inside.

Just like those stagehands taking care of the stage scenery during an intermission, they quickly carried away the body without faltering for even a moment.

Before I realized it, the mysterious human figures disappeared from my field of vision.

All that was left were the dense trees and thick overgrown grass blended into the night, with me who was showing a stupefied expression while standing alone.

Even if I cleared my ears, the sound of the breeze shaking the tree leaves was the only thing I heard.

I turned back and tried to run away.

Hoping wholeheartedly to leave this place as fast as possible, I eagerly moved my limbs which were barely reacting as I want.

I was entranced by a feeling as if those people were pursuing me, and kept running through the abandoned buildings leaving behind the homeless community and choosing a road with the most traffic and people.

Leaving aside the feeling of being victimized by having the corpse snatched away from me, all what I thought about was my good luck for not directing their attention towards me.

When I finally regained my reason, I had already got on the train, cramped within the people's breath and warmth.

By the time I got down to the nearest station, my fear had considerably calmed down. However, I couldn't help but feel downhearted. For the first time, the obscene scenery of the flower district felt kind and gentle as if it was welcoming my cowardly self back.

I went back home, directly entered the living room and lied down on the sofa.

Recalling the earlier event which I already became unable to distinguish whether it was a dream or reality, my heart started to break up.

I had no idea about who those people were, nor what were they doing in that copse, but one thing in my mind was for sure, and that is the idea of not wishing to meet them ever again.

Realizing my uncovered cowardliness and fear, I felt useless and a deep sigh slipped from my mouth.

[I don't know what happened but, don't let it get to you. Eat food and stay in spirit!]

The person who noticed me all dejected and was trying to cheer me up using awkward Japanese was a woman named Rosari. That's indeed a name that gives the impression of a young noble woman, but in actual truth, this Rosari who's grilling a hamburger steak for me in the kitchen is just a normal woman with darkish skin. It's pretty hard to call her beautiful since she possesses the looks of both a frog and a pigeon. However, her culinary skills are high class. I haven't yet seized the standards Haruhito is using to choose a woman for my cooking duty, which makes the risk way too big, but this time it seems he picked the right person.

Haruhito went for a trip to collect information two days ago. Thanks to that, I can now freely wander anywhere and anytime I feel like it. However, Haruhito will eventually come back, and I need to consider what to do at that time. I shouldn't let anybody discover the grown up Misaki in my room.

While eating the hamburger steak Rosari made for me, the TV news was talking about a parent and child who were rejected from the livelihood protection, passing away from hunger. It was said that when they discovered the bodies, no essential utensils were around and all that was inside the refrigerator was some oxidized mayonnaise.

In this country, more than ten million tons of food supplies are disposed of before reaching the dinner table. Even so, people who don't obtain a single piece of bread and starve to death still exist. How ridiculous.

[If he was hungry he could just eat the kid]

Rosari who was sitting in front of me on the table, released some unbelievable words while looking unconcerned.

[Does such a disturbing habit exist in your home country?]

[Selling blood, selling hair, selling internal organs because of poverty is normal. But no eating a child, God would not allow it]

[Then why did you say he should eat the child then?]

[Do not kill him. If he die alone, he can eat him. If he can stay alive by eating him, God will permit it]

Hearing Rosari's opinion full of hand gestures, I remembered the accident of the plane with forty passengers that crashed in the mountains when it was flying to South America. Sixteen of them returned alive after surviving a long while in an extreme situation on the high mountains, depending on only small provisions for food. However, it was confirmed that they resorted to eating the diseased flesh of their own to make it this far. An incident that confused the whole world. There was even a devoted Christian among them who said: "their souls have already separated from their bodies and are departing towards God. Their remains are nothing but mere flesh". And after confessing their act to a Catholic church, the answer was: "If no different measures existed to survive except for eating a passing person's flesh, then nobody would blame you for that conduct, and there is no need to worry about it". In other words, the church's opinion implied that there was no necessity to ask for God's forgiveness.

Perhaps this is what Rosari was trying to say, even though I'm entirely against it. Despite it being an indispensable act to remain alive, human flesh is still human flesh.

Erisa considered "cannibalism" as something to not deeply analyze and judge. But still, I do think there's a certain line that a person shouldn't cross.

[There are people who eat human meat in Japan. There are even people who make others eat their own meat]

[Making others eat their own flesh?]

When I asked back without holding my astonishment, Rosari started talking about her personal experience.

[It's a story about when I still was in Yokohama]

Back then, she was working in a brothel. Her job was to receive the order from customers, head to the appointed room and offer them a sexual service. I recall Haruhito mentioning something about it being established in some places unknown to ordinary people. A type of occupation that doesn't cease of troubles with the customers.

Rosari's appointed client this time, was a wealthy man in the prime of life. He was wearing some high-class clothes and held a kind personality, indeed a gentleman. The man was pleased with Rosari and began nominating her every fifteen days.

On the fifth appointment, he instead called her to his mansion rather than the usual hotel.

[It was very wide and very pretty. I felt jealous and was thinking if only I lived in such a lovely place]

When she was washing his body in the bathroom, the man assembled his resolved and decided to break the ice.

–Can you eat my body today?

[I was surprised. I told him no, blood will come out. It's okay, I will call a doctor. And you see, a razor was in the bathroom]

In front of Rosari who was firmly denying his request, the man took the razor and started slicing the flesh of his palm. While letting out a cold sweat and continuously groaning, he proudly raised his bloodstained hand towards Rosari and cut off a part of his palm.

Do you want it to be sauteed? Or maybe you prefer it completely fried?

The man was trying his best to bring out a smile while hiding the pain and the exposed bone in the deep wound of his hand.

Without answering nor wiping her body, Rosari left the shower, quickly wore her clothes and ran away from the mansion.

[After that, he called me very often, but I told the staff "no no". They should not answer him]

Rosari made a cross with her fingers. From that day, she requested the staff not to accept a nomination from a pervert gentlemen anymore.

[It's weird. What is good about making someone eat your meat? What is enjoyable in making painful memories? If he only asked me to eat beef or pork, I'd happily answer yes!]

Looking at Rosari who was arguing with passion, I felt a huge envy for her past situation.

I earnestly wished for someone to appear before me and offer his flesh as well.

Because of Rosari's strange story, I had a weird dream that night.

I am sitting at the kitchen table.

Not in the old geisha house.

It's the house where I used to live with my parents.

My mother made a dish and lined up several plates on the table.

The main dish was a hamburger steak along with cheese on top of it.

My mother's special recipe.

When I was about to reach for the steak with my fork, I noticed something.

Hey mom, where's your right arm?

You told me you want to eat a hamburger.

I was satisfied by my mother's answer after witnessing her gentle smile.

That's right, mom chopped her right arm for my sake.

While having a friendly chat with my mother, I started eating her home cooking.

The hamburger made from my mother's flesh was so sweet and its flavor remained on my tongue.

Mom, this hamburger is too sweet.

Did I perhaps put too much sugar?

You forget things easily, don't you mom?

My mother smiled.

I do forget things easily, Mom is ashamed of herself.

I was confused and used Kuuya's hand instead of mine in this hamburger after all.

The fork I was holding with my right hand fell off.

After waking up, I kept lying in bed for a while reflecting on this dream.

Was that really just a dream?

The setting had an awful déjà vu feeling following them.

I am pretty sure I have already experienced that scene.

The times where we were eating at the same table, and having a friendly chat.

Of course, both of us weren't one handed.

Those blessed, brief moments full of happiness I shared with my mother remained in my memories for as long as I can remember.

However, at the same time, something in my mind screamed that such a memory didn't occur.

Thinking back again, I recall that my mother was very cold towards me when I was still a child. Whenever I wanted to be spoiled and drew near her, she cruelly brushed my hands away. For me, my mother wasn't someone who would gently pat my head, she was an existence who didn't bring me anything but pain and loneliness.

My mother loathed me. I became aware of that fact not very long after I was born. I didn't understand why she frankly directed those emotions towards me until she passed away. No, I still don't know even after she did.

My dream mother filled me with her gentle smile, to the point where calling it a simple vision would be too easy.

And when did she direct that smile towards me in reality? Was it beautiful? Was it really that gentle? As I thought, I can't recall my mother's face.

Chapter 07



[You can use brain-wash]- slaves- Harem- tyrant

The weather news announced the end of the rainy season and summer has officially arrived along with the glaring sun.

Under this fine weather, women were exposing their shoulders and legs as they were seducing the young men and lecherous geezers.

Children are excited about the upcoming summer vacation and are making promises with their parents to visit an amusement park or to go to the beach.

In this happy season when everyone was jumping up in excitement, my heart was sinking in the dark instead.

A completely different feeling of despair and weariness from the time I was

searching for Misaki was crushing me while I was pointlessly wandering the town then going back home. This is the fifth day I'm repeating the same routine.

I already made a plan to acquire a corpse. I also made the preparations for executing it. However, the last piece to bring up the resolution I need in order to move according to this plan is still buried somewhere I can't reach. I'm still not confident whether I have enough courage to put it into effect.

I silently walked around the town which was slowly swallowed up in the darkness.

Passing by a cafe bar, I saw the figures of some college students sitting oppositely in its open terrace and having a talk. Judging from their facial expressions I can tell that they're discussing an important matter.

Speaking up your troubles to a friend. Only this simple deed makes me terribly envious.

For as long as I can remember, I was bad at measuring my distance with others. I didn't have the least idea about how far I am allowed to step into someone else's heart, or how much I should confide to the other party to make them trust me. Whenever I received a favor from someone, or whenever they waved their hands towards me, I sensed from them the feeling of wanting to draw back. Even at this age now, those who I consider as friends could be counted on one hand, not to mention, these valuable friendships of mine have completely disappeared due to the long distance.

Even if supposedly, I had a friend whom I can speak to with a calm mind and spirit, I don't think I would go on and ask him for a way to obtain human flesh. In the end, keeping a distance with the other party is better than speaking my mind clumsily and having them report me to the police.

I wonder how am I supposed to deal with a secret anguish sealed deep inside my heart.

When I was walking my way through the streets with a dispirited mood, in front of me, a man wearing a red aloha shirt and sunglasses waved his hand while looking at my direction.

[Heey, boy! It's me! me, me! Don't get the wrong idea though, I'm not a fraud]

That man leisurely marched toward me and removed his glasses.

It took me a short while to make a connection between the face before me and the one I met in Erisa's shop.

[What are you doing in such a place with that gloomy face?]

Same to you, why is a fine adult like yourself aimlessly loitering on a weekday?

I endured the urge to answer him back with a similar question and briefly explained my situation after hearing out that flesh is necessary to the Shishikuibana from Erisa.

[That woman's got a mischievous personality as usual. She could just have told you that from the start and everything would be nice. She's definitely a sadist right. She enjoys watching the Shishikuibana's owners going through a hard time. Just because she's a cutie doesn't mean she can get too full of herself like that]

The man started bad mouthing Erisa without controlling his voice. I recall the exchange between both of them last time. Perhaps he was forced to undergo a bitter experience by her as well.

[By the way boy, you still have some time to spare?]

[My name is Mamesaki Kuuya. And yes, I still have a bit of time]

Honestly, I just wanted to go back home and comfort myself by gazing at Misaki. But thinking about the pain of refusing his invitation, I decided to go along.

[Aight then, Soramame, let's invite you to my house. I can help you with some advice as your senior in this field]

[What's Soramame?]

[Kuuya and Mamesaki. By using the initial kanji in both of them it becomes Soramame. Don't you think it's a good nickname for a shorty like you?]

—Sorry for being a shorty.

It's quite irritating having someone making fun of my appearance, but I thought it wasn't interesting to complain about it currently.

I followed the man called Andou to a tower mansion near the station. Passing the entrance after a fingerprint confirmation, I noticed a security guard room in the frontward. Countless security cameras were installed in the elevator hall surveying the interior without leaving any gaps. Looking at this strict security, I easily understood that this is not a mansion of common rent.

[Rent price? Something close to blowing off the income of an average hard-working salaryman I guess]

When I asked him about it in the elevator, Ando answered me casually without hesitation.

The chosen people, this sentence crossed my mind after hearing the answer.

Ando's apartment was on the fifty-first floor.

[Open]

In response to his short order, I heard the sound of the lock automatically moving in the door.

[It's a voice identification inserted to an auto lock module. I drove the landlord to install it for me no matter what. It doesn't open for anyone expect me, from both the inside and the outside]

By opening the door, a young woman wearing an oversized T-shirt was using a mat instead of a futon and sprawling in a careless posture.

[Huh!? Don't tumble around in places like this you bitch!]

The young woman jumped up by Ando's kick and leaped to the inner room with high speed.

[Dammit, what a brute! Well, I'm not providing them with a bed to use, sleeping on the floor is only natural I guess]

When I was guided to the room where the woman went, I was startled by seeing what was in front of me.

There was a vast living room connected with a counter kitchen. Behind the counter, western liquor bottles were placed on a shelf and released a faint light. The furniture was high class to the point where it makes you hesitate to even touch it. In one of the walls opposing the window, a huge aquarium was standing still and tropical fish were comfortably swimming and weaving their way inside the aquatic plants.

I heard he was an individual investigator, but I can't spot any research documents or equipment in here. Maybe his work place is in another room.

[What an amazing room!]

Ando's reaction to my compliment was weak. He's probably accustomed to hearing this kind of boring words of praise every single time.

Two young women dressed in camisoles were sitting on a leather sofa. Without caring to stand up, they kept staring at me with their contemptuous gazes.

[‘ey! Why are you lazing around! How many times did I tell you?! If a guest enters, then fucking welcome him! Now move!]

The women stood up reacting to Ando’s maniacal roar and moved their peach-looking round butts to hide behind the counter.

The one who was lying down at the entrance was squatting in the room corner holding her knees and peeking at Ando’s expression with a frightened glance.

[You too! Stop making that irritating face and prepare the feed, stupid woman!]

The T-shirt woman stood up and went to the kitchen while dragging her leg that received the earlier kick.

[I showed you some shameful stuff for the first time, didn’t I? Dammit, it looks like they don’t care. Even if they’re quite attractive, dealing with a dog or cat is much better than this]

[Are you raising the Shishikuibana over there?]

[Ah, that’s right. I didn’t call the Soramame boy just to inspect my house, did I? Aight, let’s get to the real thing]

It looks like he forgot the original intention of inviting me until I reminded him.

I was guided to an eight tatami western style room. Apparently, it was a guest room in the past.

The interior had no furniture installed. However, around ten potted plants were lining up on the wooden floor.

All of them were “female”

I had trouble to figure out where to place my eyes, but I persuaded myself of the fact that they were plants and not humans.

The plants were in different states of growth. There were some with an ambiguously shaped stalk seeming to have started puffing not too long ago, and there were those with a full grown body and a withered flower hanging in their heads. All the Shishikuibana that have developed to a human shape were sitting while holding their knees. I remember the Shishikuibana boy in Erisa’s shop making the same pose. Maybe all of them take this stance naturally when

maturing.

[I like them to be at this approximate age]

Ando pointed to a beautiful black haired Shishikuibana stretching till the hips. She is pretty erotic indeed, though, she was lacking the feeling of youth.

[This one was a thirty-three old divorced woman. Stating she got all lonely after breaking up with her husband, she started spending every night with a different man in the street. She didn't understand that her unfaithfulness was the original cause of the divorce. Her body's affinity was not bad, but you see, I hate women with this kind of character]

[So that's why you turned it into a Shishikuibana?]

[That's correct]

The long T-shirt woman sluggishly walked over us while carrying the "meat" in a stainless tray.

Ando received the tray and drove her away from the room with a hand gesture as if he was chasing out a dog.

[Is this the flesh of the girl you brought to Erisa's shop that day?]

[Nah, I delivered her the whole thing that time. Giving her the entire body is the condition of acquiring the seed after all. I initially thought of offering the girl to stay one night if she was willing to flirt with me, but once I remembered the seed, I decided to take the opportunity and kill her. Nobody would care where she is in any case]

[Whose flesh are you feeding the Shishikuibana then?]

[Eh? You inquiring for information? Mine are pretty expensive you know]

Cold sweat ran through my neck by having my scheme seen through.

Ando kept glaring at me while biting his lips, but he eventually became unable to bear it and burst out into laughter.

[I'm just kidding! Just kidding! It can't be helped it, let's give the confused Soramame boy some information for free, shall we? It should turn out to be useful for you]

Ando gripped the flesh from the tray and waved it in the air.

[We usually send in living children from certain destitute foreign areas to Japan. Using money of course. The market does actually exist, since there are plenty of rich people who are willing to offer cash in order to adopt them. For the parents, it doesn't only reduce another mouth to feed, but they can also gain profit from it. Although they don't have the slightest idea that their children are chopped off and fed to a plant]

[Immigrating children with the false purpose of adopting them?]

[I wouldn't go to the troubles of adopting them since they will be turning into meat anyway. That's why we're smuggling them. If we use the legal route, there are enough chances of getting suspected by the authorities]

After Ando offered the foreign child's flesh to the widow Shishikuibana, he approached his face near its ear.

[You are blessed, aren't you? You got released from this world's ties to end up living in my place. Just forget about that husband who threw you away. Such a man doesn't exist here anymore. All you have to do is stay with me and feed on flesh. Getting raised by me is your prime delight, and nothing makes you happier than devoting yourself to please me]

He said the same thing to the other Shishikuibana as well. Every single word he whispered to them was fraught with arrogance and deceptions.

[Do you do this every day?]

[You see, you can brainwash the Shishikuibana if you do this. These fellows do not only have the same internal organs as humans but also the brain. They can maintain the memories and personality they had before dying. But It's possible to erase the inconvenient memories or even to alter their past life. They're still unable to use their mouth, but their ears are working just fine]

[But what's the purpose of doing all of this if they can't talk or walk? They are nothing but humans growing in a pot and made for viewing pleasure I mean]

[Huh? You don't know? The Shishikuibana is able to talk and move]

[Eh?]

I didn't believe my ears after hearing Ando's few shocking words.

[Are you serious? Could they move? I never heard about this]

[Oh c'mon. She didn't talk to you about this either?]

Ando scratched his head while looking both surprised and confused.

[You know about the flower that blooms on their head, right? Before that flower turns into light brown and withers away you need to cut the growing root behind their legs. It's pretty thin, so just a small cutter would do the job. And....that's it I guess. They will eventually stand up alone and start talking]

[How did you know all of this?]

[Around the time when I started raising them, I pressed that woman for an answer. I caught her naked at that moment and took advantage of the situation. After asking her "tell me how to do it!", she easily spilled out everything without resisting]

[Wait! Does that mean all those women in the living room are Shishikuibana?]

I unintentionally raised my voice.

[That's right. They're not only useful for housework and miscellaneous stuff, but they also take care of my body. Just to let you get the correct idea, I'm not getting nursed, in other words, am using them as sex partners and doing them whenever and however I want. Very convenient slaves if I say so myself]

[In that case, why not just do it with a real human? With all the money you have, you can just hire a maid or surround yourself with lovers anytime you want]

[You can't make a woman as your own without throwing all your money at her face. Even if you surround yourself with lovers, they will keep on annoying you "I want to eat that" or "buy me that", and if you reduce the amount you're spending on them just by a small bit, they will immediately leave you behind. Speaking of maids, you never know what will happen if you choose the wrong one. Once she finds your cash vault, she will keep on absorbing it till it's left with only air. You can acquire a human heart using money, but you can never buy their souls. Women are often seen as foxes in the end. Behind that forced smile she makes in front of you, she is actually looking down at you while sticking out her tongue]

I ignored Ando's intense complaints about women and observed the Shishikuibana in the room. All of them were killed and turned into plants in order to bring his ideal harem into reality. To top it off, their memories and personality got overwritten by him. Even if he's feigning innocence, I don't think it's forgivable to kill people casually like that.

My chest started to gradually hurt while I was lost in deep thoughts, so I excused myself from Ando's apartment.

[That's unfortunate, I was planning on showing you more stuff just now. Oh well, we shall do that at the next opportunity I guess]

While I was putting on my shoes near the door, a sudden question popped up in my mind.

[I wonder why Erisa didn't tell me that the Shishikuibana could move]

[That's because she has her own reasons to not tell you]

[Did something happen in her past perhaps?]

Ando welled up a suspicious grin.

[You can just ask her if you wanna know. Though am not sure whether she will answer you or not]

The door opened again after Ando's short "open" command.

[Well then, later! Next time you visit bring your Shishikuibana along]

After exiting the mansion, it was already nighttime and darkness surrounded the place.

Ando's haughty attitude was indeed disturbing, however, getting invited to his house was definitely a fortune for me. I will turn the Shishikuibana, Misaki into a human. At the moment I realized that I could adapt this empty dream into reality, my heart was refreshed. Witnessing the moving Shishikuibana earlier served for a great push.

However, at the same time, countless problems started emerging.

The first problem is as usual, How can I acquire human flesh.

As expected, Ando's method is impossible for me to execute, simply because I don't own enough money and connections. Probably, the only option I still have is wandering in the town and praying to stumble upon a corpse.

The second problem is the unclear intentions of Erisa. Why didn't she inform me about the Shishikuibana's matter?

Judging from Ando's information, it is safe to assume that she was hiding it from me on purpose. I still don't know her plan for doing so, however, if it held some kind of disadvantage in her side, then all I have to do is to turn Misaki into a human in order to expose it.

While I was walking my way and thinking about all kind of possible circumstances, I spotted Erisa's street stall.

But, she was not alone. A slender man wearing a dark suit in this summer season was arguing with her. His facial expression showed that he was pressed by something urgent, but by switching my sight to Erisa again, she looked as unconcerned as always. After the conversation reached an end, Erisa nodded her head, quickly cleared the stall and rode her car with that man.

I kept observing the whole scene in a place far enough to avoid getting noticed by her.

Who is that guy? What are they doing? I decided to stop thinking about such useless doubts and returned my thoughts to the beginning.

Ando told me that I could brainwash the Shishikuibana. I'm not sure whether that was the result, but those women in his apartment did indeed seem a bit dull. Seeing them willingly following his orders gives an impression as if they were tamed.

What kept me insecure in his place, was the glances of the Shishikuibana who were peeping at his face in the living room. Rather than respect or fear, I felt a different emotion accumulated in their eyes.

I considered going back to check on these uncertainties floating in my mind, however, that never happened.

In other words, this was the first and last day I visited Ando's apartment.

Chapter 08



[You finally crossed over]- residents of darkness- grim reaper- murder

[‘ey there young man, wanna have a good time? How about two, no, one thousand yen?]

When I was returning from Ando’s apartment, an old woman hiding in the darkness of the alley behind the shopping street was waving her hand to me.

She’s probably one those old prostitutes called the thousand yen grandma in this town.

In the red light district I’m living in currently, witnessing the sight of prostitutes standing on the street corners is not that rare. In the end, this place is the fallen remains of an old, well-known land of prostitution.

It is often said in rumors that these grandmas were old timers in this extinct land, but you can tell that by just looking at them and guessing their age, which probably exceeds sixty.

But leaving this talk aside, the “thousand yen grandma” nickname apparently originates from the price that they request. I’ve already heard about this weird bit of information long ago, however, this is my first time meeting the real deal.

For a young man, he would most likely refuse to sleep with an aged-old hag even if she offered him the thousand yen instead. Though, in my case, I approached the thousand yen grandma while gulping.

[Are you really fine with one thousand?]

I took out a thousand yen bill from my wallet and handed it to the grandma prostitute. By getting closer to her, she looked as thin as a dried persimmons and an intense scent of sweat and garlic was emanating from her body.

The grandma’s confused sight kept switching between me and the thousand yen bill.

A few seconds later, she smiled at me while showing her uneven teeth.

[Hehe, thank ya, thank ya! You’re a pretty handsome boy aren’t you?]

After spelling out her fake flattery, the grandma took the bill and quickly pushed it into her bust. It appears she’s one of those women who don’t use a wallet.

Following this action, she dragged me from my sleeve and brought me to an old shop in a small alley. Lights were turned off, outer walls were full of cracks and the glass inserted in the entrance door was smashed and shattered everywhere on the ground.

The shop doesn’t seem to be in use.

[There’s no electricity in this place, so sorry about that. Careful not to trip]

I just came to realize it, the door’s lock was broken.

She’s obviously using this ruined shop as a workplace without permission.

Following after the grandma, I walked inside the shop. The wide concrete floor seeming to be used as the actual workshop was connected with a living room in the interior. Right under the stile of the room, an empty soy sauce drum without a label was set as a shoes holder. When the grandma placed her shoes in, the

drum echoed a disturbing sound.

[You can go for it raw. Big sis is already done with that phase after all]

Who's the big sis?!

Before I noticed it, a near-dead battery lamp was releasing a faint light and illuminating this dim place.

The grandma went above the laid futon and started to hastily undress. Her dried skin and faded limbs made their appearance after she took off her worn out slip dress. Of course, there was no sexy ambiance floating around at all. I wonder who would be willing to pay a thousand yen just to embrace an old hag like this.

The reason I accepted her offer was not because I desired her withering body.

It was in order to achieve my plan to bring Misaki back to life. If I want to have the fish, I'm going to need to get in the water and get my legs wet.

From the moment I saw the moving Shishikuibana in Ando's apartment, I felt a burning desire inside of me, but I remained hesitant, unsure whether it is possible to snatch away someone else's life for Misaki's sake.

At the time when I blew off the last piece of my wavering and perfected my resolution, I happened to pass by the grandma. She's a person who makes a living by prostitution, there's no way she could have someone to rely on. Even if she disappears from this world, I doubt there will be anybody who will grieve about her death.

I will kill the thousand yen grandma.

It would be much better if I could turn Misaki into a human without having to use this method, but in the end, it appeared that this is the only possible way for me.

I took out the blackjack I ordered by mail from my back pocket (a tool with the shape of a spoon covered in leather and filled with lead. A blunt weapon made from simple ingredient, however still have enough power to wound and kill a person) and snuck toward the back of the grandma who was steadily folding her clothes.

A sudden loss of nerve struck me, making me close to dropping the blackjack.

I recalled Misaki's face. That carefree smile she made while she was still alive.

I noticed grandma's hand still holding the slip dress.

Don't hesitate! Do it!

Getting pushed by my inner thoughts, I aimed for the back of her head and struck a hard blow.

I heard the breaking sound of a flower vase following the collapse of her dead tree looking body.

Without giving her a chance, I made a second and third hit aiming at her cranium while grandma's body responded with a cramping pain. A very short while later, she stopped moving entirely.

I breathed heavily and looked down at the unmoving grandma. I lost the sensation of the blackjack in my hand and my legs wouldn't stop trembling. My heart was furiously throbbing to the point where I sensed as if it was going to break through my chest.

[SHtoP iT, CusTOmer!]

Grandma suddenly stood up as if she was possessed by a certain something and began loudly screaming. Her bra slipped off by that swift move making her wilted breast and dried dark brown nipples exposed.

I was taken aback by her unexpected behavior and fell on my backside.

Grandma bent her neck toward my face and scowled at me with her eyes which turned into a yellow color.

[SHtahP!]

A few moments after she made her second scream, the thousand yen grandma collapsed on the floor after letting out a huge fart and didn't shift anymore. I was about to suffocate from the dispersed rotting smell filling the room.

I waited until clearing my throat and then hit three more blows to her head in succession till her eyeball flew out. While having this strange wonder about her eyeball being glossy although her body is all rigid, I went to contact Erisa.

[I acquired some flesh and I want you to take care of it]

After informing her of the location, I remained to wait outside. The stench of the corpse inside the room was about to make me faint. The smell churned my stomach, but not to the point of vomiting.

I turned toward the dirty glass of the outside door and noticed my own reflection

being projected within it. That standing figure which was skillfully tracing my moves like a doll looked very distant to me.

Erisa arrived at the designated place twenty minutes after I contacted her. Dressing in black from head to toe, she looked like a grim reaper coming to harvest a soul.

[The body is inside?]

I nodded and asked her about how she will transport it.

[It's not me who will transport it. The cooperators will take care of the job]

I heard a squirming sound coming from the dark back alley right after Erisa finished her last word. Several short shadowy figures wearing worn out clothes appeared from the darkness.

I recalled the people who snatched the hanging body from the branch in the copse a few days ago.

[They are the Mogura]

It seems that's how they're called, according to Erisa.

Judging from their timing, it looks like they were concealing their presence in the dark near me while I was waiting for Erisa. At the instant I realized this fact, a cold chill ran down my spine. All this time I was defenselessly standing still in this darkness, unaware of these goblin-like group being right beside me.

[There's a river around this area that became a closed conduit. Currently, water has already stopped running through it, so these people are settling within its laid out remains. They reside in the darkness and make their living from eating human flesh. The reason they're called as Mogura is because they rarely crawl out above ground in the daylight]

When Erisa whispered them the instructions, the Mogura went inside the room.

Although I can hear the sounds of their operations and movements, not a single voice reached my ears. Come to think of it, they were also speechless last time I saw them in the copse. Maybe they don't have a language, or perhaps they have a regulation to not talk while working in order to avoid unnecessary disturbance. I wouldn't go out of my way to confirm the truth anyway since I'm not in the least interested.

[Did you know them from a long time ago?]

[Yeah, from my father's generation. Whenever I needed someone to deal with my corpses, I turn to them for a request. It's also the main reason why I go set my flower stall and deal with those window-shoppers in uncommon places. And of course, the Mogura require half the body to do the job]

Then does that mean that the man I observed earlier riding the car with her is one of the regular customers?

[Give and take for the sake of coexistence, is that it?]

[That's right. The price I suggested to you that time doesn't leave for me anything of profit. If I can take only a small portion to fill my stomach from the other half left for you, then that would be enough]

Now I'm feeling all ashamed for thinking about her as a greedy profiteer.

As if she sensed my regret, Erisa made a meek expression.

[It's fine if you think of me as a cowardly woman who abuses any opportunity to acquire flesh without any labor]

[I wouldn't think of you like that. You're the only person who could dismantle the corpse for me, and in the first place, I wouldn't have acquired the body if I didn't meet you]

[Hearing that makes me at ease]

The Mogura troupe exited the room holding a huge bag. They work fast, as usual. After seeing off the Mogura disappearing into the darkness, Erisa rode back her car which was stationed near the alley.

[Leave the rest for them and come with me to the shop. They should have already delivered the corpse by the time we make it back since they're pretty familiar with the underground construction]

Erisa didn't ask me about whose flesh it was or how I obtained it at all.

While the car was bouncing on the way, I kept gazing at the distant night view. I wonder how many thousands, how many millions of lives were lost in these kinds of places and moments. Maybe among those lost lives, many of them were suddenly snatched away. Just like what I did tonight.

[You finally crossed over]

I didn't ask her about what she meant.

The only reaction I had to her spoken words was a loose consciousness of me finally becoming a murderer.

Upon seeing the wrinkled corpse cut apart in front of her, Erisa revealed a confused frown.

[What could this be?]

[What shall I do with the unneeded parts, Milady?]

[Throw them out, or give them to the Mogura, what a waste. If only they gave us the lower half. Can't be helped now]

[Did something happen?]

Adding oil to fire with my question, Erisa answered me with a grim face.

[It did! A big something! Leaving aside the freshness that doesn't exist, the age you picked is too old. It goes without saying that nobody would eat such a meat, the quality of human flesh drops through aging after all. Didn't you know that the flesh of an old person is not delicious at all?]

[I never tasted it so I can't tell]

[The second problem is this]

Erisa took a meat cleaver and cut through the thousand yen grandma's stomach section. Then without caring about the spilling blood she extended the cut slit with her hands.

[As expected.....hey, stop making that pale face and look over here. All her internal organs are suffering serious damage. Looks like she had enough of a hard time finding something to eat to the point where visiting a doctor was out of the question]

Erisa used the cleaver again to cut a blackish organ peeking from grandma's ribs (probably her liver) and dark red blood started dripping in a straight line.

[Did you know, the taste of blood changes depending on the stress the person

receives before they die. A sudden move, fear, pain, intense excitement, starvation, and even sickness. The stress takes away a huge amount of energy from the flesh, which drops its quality]

Erisa carried on talking while holding a part of the corpse's stomach and inspecting it.

[The Shishikuibana's growth condition is also influenced by the quality of the flesh. The more inferior the quality, the more negative the influence. It is preferable for the body to experience an instant death with the less possible pain. Accident and jumping suicides, or in general, the situations where the person is not aware of their death are the best. Comparing the flesh you brought to the earlier anticipations, I can't give it even a passing mark]

I was pushed down into a deep feeling of despair. After I was finally able to accomplish my resolution and obtain a corpse it ended up to be disqualified. All of what I did was nothing but a waste of labor.

[You don't have to get all dejected like that. If we choose the useful parts you should be good]

After Kanade finished cutting down the corpse while muttering "useful" and "unuseful" she sorted the flesh into two piles. The unuseful pile was the biggest.

[Erisa, why do you eat human flesh?]

In the free time during Kanade's work, I inquired Erisa about something that's been bothering me for a while now.

[Is this your pure curiosity asking?]

[You did tell me about cannibalism being not wrong nor right last time, but you seem to be conscious about it being socially not allowed. I want to know why, despite knowing that, you keep on seeking the hardest meat to obtain]

[It's like you're asking me why does a koala feed on eucalyptus]

Erisa began her explanation while Kanade didn't remove her sight from her task.

[There are various kinds of reasons as to why people conduct an act of cannibalism. Eating the flesh of your enemy in wars is a way to convey revenge. Sometimes it's done in order to steal the strength, the experience and the wisdom of the prey and gain a new vitality. For ranking up with one's self and having a chance to interact with God. To show sympathy to the dead. To expel a disease eating into one's body. To make one's stomach as a substitute for a grave.

Gluttony. And even for the sake of surviving in a critical situation]

I heard about this in a class, at times of severe famine, when eating cats and dogs becomes unsatisfying, people resort to eating the flesh of those who died by starvation in order to avoid the same fate.

[Those kinds of emergency conduct takes place in lots of countries. The long established cultures and morals have exterminated cannibalism, however, its dark shadow still exists in everyone's heart waiting for a chance to make its appearance again]

[Out of all these examples you told me, which one is in your case?]

[You can say that my case applies to one of them while at the same time applies to none. My eating habit doesn't exceed ten per cent of the eucalyptus a koala eats, but what's certain is that I follow the same unbalanced diet as they do]

[I still don't have the least idea about what you're talking about]

During our short chat, Kanade finished her work.

The considerable amount of flesh left on grandma's body seems to be unnecessary. The quantity of useful meat was about the same size as her head.

Kanade took the biggest half of that amount, stuffed it into a plastic container and gave it to me.

[Sometimes I think about this. Perhaps the Shishikuibana is the negative legacy of the taboo that humans abandoned during the process of their evolution into an intellectual being. Maybe inside the Shishikuibana lurks the black records of the human history which was not even allowed to be left for the future generations]

[Negative legacy....hm]

While parroting her words, I fell into deep thought, thinking about Erisa's idea.

The miserable Shishikuibana that was forcefully brought back because of human's ego. If Erisa's approach is correct, then that makes the inside of Misaki who's waiting for me to feed her flesh is hiding a black history of humanity that should be locked away. The blood of the same color it bears should manifest the redness of the sins that humanity have carried along. If we boil down that blood in a pot, it is possible that a deep and muddled black color would result from it.

[I wonder how did the first person who performed cannibalism think about eating his kind]

[Maybe he was curious to know how does a human taste when eaten. Who knows, the prohibited fruit which Adam and Eve ate when breaking their promise with God could've unexpectedly tasted like human flesh as well]

If Erisa was an inhabitant of paradise, she would definitely step in the taboo, leisurely stuff the fruit in her cheek and gladly get herself expelled.

The pleasure garden for her only exists above ground, where a large number of human beings live.

Am I also banned from paradise now that I have murdered the thousand yen grandma for her flesh?

The Pygmalion is Planting Seeds - Volume 02

Chapter 09



Without any further delay, I went back home and fed Misaki the flesh of the thousand yen grandma.

Upon smelling the scent of the flesh, Misaki opened her mouth, made a small

bite, slowly chewed it and swallowed it down to make the second one.

The sight of Misaki eating the feed had a similar image of Erisa enjoying her dinner in the first time we met.

The voluptuous figure of a beautiful woman eating.

I once heard about appetite and sexual desire being connected in a certain part of the mind, I'm starting to realize that it is indeed true after all.

The small piece of meat I gave her in the palm of my hand disappears in the blink of time. It didn't take too long for the plastic container to become empty.

The slight redness left on her skin after finishing her meal made her look as if she was satisfied by savoring the taste of her first flesh.

After assuring that Misaki ate the whole thing, the lurking weariness I accumulated had finally taken its effect in one go. As a result, I slipped into the bed and had a sound sleep with not even a single dream.

The next morning when I woke up, Misaki's flower started blooming. Inside the petal of this velvet-like flower, small particles were swarming and making the shape of a sea anemone. A faint scent similar to that of a plum blossom was emitted from it.

What pulled my attention even more was the drastic growth Misaki had undergone. I was indeed aware that the Shishikuibana's development is very fast, however, despite knowing about it, I was still taken by surprise realizing that Misaki's body took a complete human form under only one night. It's all because of that meat. Forming the usual posture by holding her knees, she's not yet at her perfect size, but still big enough to carry her within my arms.

That ambiguously shaped body of hers matured to transform into a nude adult woman. It could be described as that the flesh played the trigger, allowing the Shishikuibana to transform like a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis. When touching her elastic skin, a slight feeling of warmth transmitted to my fingers. Her round bottom made from soft flesh was nailed inside the pot. Misaki's current appearance would make any healthy young man lust after her. I could totally agree with Ando's style of life after beholding this sight in front of me.

I shut the closet door, picked my bag full of books and left the house.

Lately, I've been too busy searching for a corpse while leaving my studies without progress. It is true that my head was stuffed thinking of Misaki, however, the

foolish act of neglecting my Ronin life is the same as a rich man dissipating his entire fortune without thinking any further.

I took out my phone inside the swinging train and brought up my contact list.

It's been almost one month since Misaki's disappearance now and Isezaki is still far from giving up. At this rate, it became quite clear that he's about to waste the first term in his university.

Our former classmates who were in daily contact with him for the first few days after he declared Misaki's vanishment, have considerably decreased by now and are rarely responding to his messages. It feels like they're implying that they're out of interest and spare time to keep on following him around.

For me who has a clear view on the situation, Isezaki seemed like an ant inside a sealed bottle seeking to crawl out from its unexisting exit.

I took out my phone again after entering the library's lobby and went to write a message.

At the instant I was going to press the send button, my finger froze.

I changed my mind and thought that it would be better if I called him directly.

Ten ring tones following the insertion of the number, I heard his voice answering.

[Hello, who's with me?]

Looks like my number is not registered in his contact list.

[It's Mamesaki. I called you because I wanted to talk about something]

[What do you need?]

Judging from Isezaki's voice, he's not even trying to hide his irritation. I took a deep breath and provided him with the stunning information.

[Misaki's whereabouts]

[What did you just say?!]

His loud voice pierced my eardrums. I can easily sense his increasing excitement. If I was meeting him personally right now, he would be definitely pressing me while grasping my collar.

[She's in my house. I'm kinda busy today so I won't be coming back until night. Can you pass by around ten o'clock?]

[Misaki is safe? I can't get in touch with her at all]

[It seems she dropped her phone somewhere. But don't worry, she's fine]

[Is that so? Thank god!!]

Hearing Isezaki's relieved voice, I felt a bit sorry for deceiving him.

However, I didn't say any lie. Misaki is indeed in my house and I do actually have business to do with him. Though, I hold no idea about her phone's location.

I vocally informed Isezaki about my address and cut the call.

I was expecting him to get a little suspicious of me, but surprisingly enough, he had a straightforward personality.

He didn't bother to give me a single word of gratitude for providing him with Misaki's news. However, either way, I wouldn't care whether he did or not. I mean, for someone who spent three years together with me and didn't exchange the least conversation besides of class related topics, it is only natural to think about him as an unrelated person in my life.

Rather Isezaki was less important than a nose wart for me.

The basis for giving him this position is obvious, because he's Misaki's boyfriend. Leaving aside the time of my confession, it was all because of him following Misaki around everywhere that I didn't have a chance to interact with her during all these three years.

I finished up my study session ahead of time, went to the home center for shopping, returned back home at the usual time and ate the dinner cooked by Rosari. After finishing the clean up, Rosari left a little before nine o'clock. And using the remaining hour, I silently advanced the preparation to welcome him.

Isezaki arrived at my place at the exact time. His face which I didn't encounter for three months looked like a ghost who has been wandering in hell. The abnormal thin cheeks and the black eye bags covered the cheerful expression he had in high school days.

[I'm here for Misaki!]

Without waiting for my permission, Isezaki stepped in and went straight to the

second floor.

[Misaki!]

Calling out her name, he opened the doors one by one. I understand that he's flurried but that's pretty rude.

[Misaki!]

After taking a peek at the last room, mine, he turned toward me.

[Hey! she's not here! Where is she?]

[Calm down Isezaki, she's inside that room]

[I told you she's not here!]

I can't blame him for getting impatient. Misaki is nowhere to be found in the room. It's just a tasteless chamber with a bed, a desk, two bookshelves and impervious sheets set on the floor.

[She's inside dammit!]

Isezaki jumped to the closet I indicated to him and violently slid its door.

He then froze like a sculpture for a few seconds upon seeing the Misaki within the closet.

[Misaki!]

Isezaki firmly grabbed the shoulders of the sleeping Misaki who was holding her knees and started shouting out her name.

Hey, come on, give me a break here Isezaki. She may collapse if you strongly sway her like that you know.

[Misaki! What the heck happened?]

Misaki didn't respond to him who was at the point of shredding his throat from the force of shouting.

There's no way she would respond.

I wanted to let this emotional encounter last a bit longer, but if he keeps rustling like that it would become a nuisance for the neighbors. What time do you think it

is now, Isezaki?

I swiftly moved behind Isezaki's back and used the blackjack again to hit him hard in the head.

I felt the cracking of his skull from the shock.

After adding one more blow to the collapsing Isezaki, I then dragged him to the center of the impervious sheets. The reason he didn't rise up again like the grandma was seemingly because of the critical blow I gave him this time, a blow hard enough to reap his conciseness in an instant. Maybe I hated Isezaki more than I thought I do.

I wrapped Isezaki's body in the sheets and left his neck exposed.

I'm aware of my surprise attack being a cowardly play.

However, Misaki needs fresh flesh.

He was slacking every lecture in the university looking for her. Shouldn't he be satisfied now that he could offer himself to her?

It's not me who you should begrudge, Isezaki.

If you were going to resent someone, that would yourself for hogging Misaki all these three years.

I slid the army knife blade through his carotid artery.

Isezaki's torso was laid down on the stainless table.

Erisa deeply nodded after observing the pink color peeking from the cut section.

It appears that she acknowledged the meat's freshness.

[Who's this boy?]

[Former classmate in high school]

[You killed your friend? How cruel of you]

[He's not a friend. Just a classmate]

[Could it be he's Iruse Misaki's boyfriend?]

[How did you know?]

[The bruise in the back of his head, the angle of the wound in his neck and of course, you standing unharmed despite being spurted all over by blood. These signs are enough to reason that you attacked him by surprise from the back and finished him off without giving him a chance to resist. What I could tell is that you called him to your place by using Iruse Misaki as bait to attract his attention, snuck behind his back, bludgeoned him in the head and then slit his neck after collapsing]

[You said it as if you were watching me the whole time. Why not just leave that flower shop behind and go start a detective job instead?]

[I only came to a conclusion which anybody could realize after observing the body and thinking about it logically. Calling it as a detective's reasoning is an evidence of you reading nothing but cheap mysteries]

[You've got a pretty sharp tongue, don't you? Rather than a detective, you're better suited for a critic]

[Did something happen? You seem to have changed somehow]

[Nothing happened and I didn't change. What's the difference you noticed?]

[Something like the ambiance you're putting on has changed. It's kind of wrong to describe it as masking off, but your personality gives an impression as if it was replaced in a single day]

[You think so? I mean, I can't tell by myself]

[You did change. In a bad way]

[Is that because I murdered an acquaintance?]

[Well, that is part of the reason, since luring someone and killing him to obtain the feed is not something a sane person would think about]

[Is that so? Personally, I think that I performed a reasonable move]

[In any case, with this, you just gave birth to the second corpse. There's no turning back now]

[I didn't have the intention of turning back from the start]

[I'm not sure about that. Weren't you frightened for the first time by knowing that flesh was necessary? At that point, the idea of murdering a former classmate and to top it off, Iruse Misaki's boyfriend didn't even rise in your mind]

[Sooner or later I was going to have him exit from my life. All that I did was hasten the process]

[You're not having the least sense of guilt, do you?]

[I do feel bad for him. However, what happened is the vanishing of a university student who's not a genius nor a great person. How could a small incident like this affect the world?]

[Hey, Kuuya]

[What?]

[As I thought, you are strange]

Wrong. I just became honest with my desires.

I can now finally agree with what Erisa said last time about Ando acting tough.

He most likely didn't kill anybody.

That arrogant character he's applying is possibly a mask, hiding his timidity and fear of becoming hated by others.

The classy clothes he wears, the rude attitude he takes and vulgar words he excessively uses are the necessary devices to make himself look bigger.

The stinking smell of dismantled corpses was overflowing in the apartment, but the one who dismantled the smuggled kids or the runaway girl was probably someone he hired using money.

The reason he's building a private harem for himself is not because he doesn't trust women, but because he lacks the self-confidence, thinking that no woman would love him from the bottom of her heart no matter how much money he holds. Yet the Shishikuibana themselves don't love him, and the auto-lock on his door sharply explains that fact. Despite brainwashing them, he is still afraid of his flowers escaping away.

Though, I'm not planning on ridiculing him about it.

Rather, I'm grateful for him.

Because he bestowed me a new hope while I was lost in the dark.

And because he taught me a method to win Misaki all for myself.

If I didn't witness the moving Shishikuibana in his house, I wouldn't have killed the thousand yen grandma by now, leaving aside Isezaki. I desired to have the resuscitated Misaki all for myself. I longed to be the only person reflected in her eyes while I'm pouring all my love and affection in bringing her up.

I picked Isezaki's flesh which was packed in a wooden box and moved it to Misaki's mouth.

I vaguely wondered about which body part she was eating.

Her sight was still gazing at empty space, however for me, she seemed somehow pleased.

Erisa brought up the talk about cannibalism being a way to express respect for the dead.

Through this piece of meat, Misaki and Isezaki are adjoining currently.

Thinking about it in such a way made me awfully envious.

By offering her flesh and blood, we get to understand each others through our souls. None is allowed for this duty except for me. There's nowhere for Isezaki to force his way in.

I need to extinguish the remaining part of his ghost buried inside Misaki.

Feeding her Isezaki's flesh, I went to whisper in her beautiful shaped ears.

Exactly like how Ando did.

Misaki, you don't need to think about anything unnecessary.

I always watched gently over you.

Nobody will soil your purity here.

I won't let anybody get intimate with you.

The flesh you are eating now belongs to no one.

The person called Isezaki Akira didn't exist.

You loved me for as far as you remembered.

We will be together for eternity.

I didn't bring up anything about the high school days.

The more I spoke my feelings to her, the desires sealed within me kept on increasing.

I want to turn Misaki back into a human.

Not as a puppet, a full human restoration.

The aspiration I held since visiting Ando's place grew vividly while residing in my Heart.

Chapter 10



Diary- Abuse- The will of God- [Because I love her]

The basement built from tiles felt chilly whenever I entered it. It was quite hard to believe the sultry night right above our heads.

Placed on the stainless table again was yet, another corpse of a boy seeming to be a grade schooler. It wasn't me who attacked him. I only noticed him lying near a riverbed, close to his death after getting run over. Though it was me who performed the finishing blow.

His tiny body that got sent flying was covered by the underbrush, which made it hard enough for me to discover him at the beginning of the dusk.

The yellow T-shirt he was wearing was dyed in blood and his mouth was continuously spluttering blood bubbles.

I surveyed my surroundings; no one was around. I put my left foot on the boy's

shoulder and stamped on his head with the right one. Making use of my weight I twisted his neck. A dull sensation transmitted to my shoe sole. I placed my hand under the nose of the boy who had his head completely bent and made sure he didn't breathe anymore. I then contacted Erisa and asked her to meet me near the riverbed.

[I think we can carry him without calling for the Mogura this time]

Putting on her ordinary cool expression before the boy's corpse, Erisa's voice sounded to be a bit excited. According to her, "the meat of this approximate age tastes the best". Maybe she's happy to acquire it without needing to share half of the body with the Mogura.

However, what distorted her cold expression were my few words brimming of determination.

[You want to set Iruse Misaki free? Are seriously saying this?]

Erisa who was reading a thick book during the free time of the dismantling process switched her view and raised her eyebrow.

[I already told you, the Shishikuibana doesn't—]

[It does! There is a way to turn it into a living human. You don't have to hide from me anymore, I know everything]

I peered through Erisa's watery, bewitching eyes.

Only the sounds of the detaching flesh and bones resounded in the basement room.

Looking as if she gave up, Erisa made a huge sigh and closed the book between her hands.

[Where did you hear about it?]

[I saw the real thing in Ando's home, the Shishikuibana walking and talking. I also heard about you showing him the means to do it]

[What a good-for-nothing man. Was he a snake in his past life?]

[Apparently, Ando's information was correct]

[Yeah, I wouldn't deny it. But I wouldn't recommend it either. The burden you will have to carry is in another league from the one you know]

[I have the resolution for anything that could happen]

[The word resolution you're saying sounds very cheap. You don't understand the meaning of releasing a life]

[You too don't understand how much I long for Misaki to revive. After witnessing all that stuff in Ando's apartment, giving up became even more impossible for me]

We glared at each other like we were enemies, but Erisa was the first to eventually avert her eyes and leave her seat.

[Shall we have an old talk?]

Erisa opened the vault and took out an old looking book with a small hasp on its edge. Seems to be a diary. Its bindings were worn out from the frequent use.

[Once upon a time, a father and his daughter lived in a cheap lodging apartment. The father had a habit of turning violent due to drinking. The mother hated this bad habit of her husband, so she met a new man outside and ran away. The aim of the father's anger and barbarity were directed to his daughter as a result. Every night, he drank alcohol, hit the little defenseless girl and kicked her flying. There was not a single day when the little girl's body bruises completely disappeared]

Erisa inserted a small key into the lock. By rotating the key, a faint snapping sound reached my ears.

[But despite her situation, the girl kept growing without falling into despair. She possessed a beautiful appearance that could make any girl envy her and any boy attracted to her. She became a flower that drew harmful insects, which were no one but her father. Crossing the line of hitting and kicking, his violence was upgraded with sexual desires for his daughter. nevertheless, this upgrade started long before her body developed into one of an adult woman. And so, her graduation took place when she was still ten-years-old]

The sound of the book pages turning overlapped with Erisa's calm voice.

[On the birthday of her thirteenth, that horrible father of hers met a dog's death. He was stabbed in the stomach while having a quarrel about something ridiculous at the bar. Because of the alcohol, blood didn't stop gushing out, making it too late for the arrival of the ambulance. The deceased father was buried and his daughter didn't accept his bones]

Erisa halted her words and faced me.

[Kuuya, could you guess what happened to the daughter after she was left alone?]

[Something like, she was finally set free and was able to walk on her own life path?]

[Wrong. The girl followed her father and took out her life]

[Why would she do that? She was finally released from her father's chains!]

I unconsciously raised my voice.

[In the girl's mind, despite her father's passing, she was still bound by him. Getting kicked and assaulted by her father was her daily life and her *raison d'être*. They were living in an indispensable co-dependence. Maybe her soul died at the moment her father was gone, and she became empty from that day until her suicide]

Erisa stopped flipping the pages.

[Following that incident, a dilettante person who knew about the story took in the girl's body illegally using his money. He wanted to employ her corpse for a certain experiment he was working on]

[Experiment? You mean...]

[The Shishikuibana, resuscitation of the dead]

The girl and the dilettante man's identity started to become clear.

But, I'm not the one who's supposed to reveal them.

[I don't want to speak about what happened next]

Instead of talking about it herself, Erisa handed me the open book.

In that book, the struggling days of a man cultivating the Shishikuibana were written down.

He went through deep suffering and despair, using countless human corpses to finally establish a legitimate method of cultivating the Shishikuibana. The gradual disordering of his handwriting was because he lost his fingers along the way. One day, the man was taking a walk in the neighborhood, when he encountered a little girl walking unsteadily before leaning on a fence exhausted. The little girl didn't seem to mind her dirty worn out clothes, with sight wandering and eyes

blank. Her thin cheeks showed that she doesn't usually take in enough nutrition.

The man took the girl along with him home and nursed her. He offered her a bath, a meal and ordered the maid to repair her clothes.

Although he knew that she was still young, the man couldn't deny her breathtaking beauty. His impression of her looks was written as, "The living treasure of heaven sent by the almighty God".

From that day, the man started to frequently meet with the girl.

The little girl eventually opened up her heart and deliberately informed him about her personal situation.

Knowing that she was abused by her father, the man felt compassionate toward her.

—I want to rescue this little girl from her father's prison.

The main motive of his will wasn't because of the girl's beauty.

He had a young past where various matters led to him tearfully break up with his wife who secluded herself with his child. Soon after, he heard that the child committed suicide.

He saw in the little girl the figure of his daughter who passed away without receiving the least bit of warmth and affection from her parents.

But he was wavering. He could easily predict the little girl running away from him if he tried to separate her forcefully from her father.

Carrying on with his unclear worries, the man kept on meeting with the girl for half a year, when one day, a funeral was held in the neighborhood.

He took a peek at the inside of the house and saw the little girl wearing her school uniform standing still.

A few days later, he was notified that she committed suicide.

Because of the remorse left in him, the man used his wealth and personal connections to obtain the girl's corpse.

—I regretted it. I had to rescue her as long as I was alive. Even if I was going to be known as a demon, even if I was going to fall to hell after my death and even if she was going to slaughter me after I resuscitate her. Her death is my fault. I'm

nothing but a cowardly criminal. My hand is covered with blood and mud. If I can't escape the path of eternal punishment, then I shall pile up my sins even more. After all, there is no water that can purify my very first sin.

He planted the seed in her head while holding on to those sorrowful emotions, brought her up by offering her flesh and blood, whispered his words overflowing with love to her and cut the root.

He revived her not as a flower in a pot, but as his new human daughter.

Following the page mentioning him reviving the girl, the book became full of his delighted words until the end.

[Why did he stop writing here?]

[Because he wasn't able to write anymore. Several days later, he sacrificed his body for the girl. He entrusted everything to his faithful maid and fell into an eternal sleep with a satisfied expression. His grave was his daughter's stomach and the tomb is this old diary he left behind. The daughter didn't know that she was eating her step father's flesh until later]

Erisa gently pulled the diary from my possession and pressed it against her chest.

[It could be said that he raised the Shishikuibana as a form of atonement for his passing daughter. He wanted to make up for it by creating a new life from the Shishikuibana, despite knowing that his act defies God's will. Or at least, that's the idea you receive after reading this diary. The daughter inherited her father's track and continued to offer the Shishikuibana to those who needed it, as if she was chasing after him]

Erisa showed a gentle smile, just like the breeze that makes flower petals dance.

[You know, it was my stepfather who gave me the name of Erisa. I forgot about my former one]

It was the first time she showed it to me, her plaintive smile.

[So, you mean you were a Shishikuibana?]

[You're as dull as usual, Kuuya. Can't you at least realize something as obvious by relating the Shishikuibana's eating habit and the "cannibalism" I conduct?]

Erisa pushed her hand against her lightly puffed chest.

[The Shishikuibana revives to its former appearance. It doesn't rejuvenate nor

does it age. As you can guess, my physical age stopped at thirteen years old]

Knowing about Erisa's background story, I somehow got the reason behind her lack of facial expressions. Her earlier severe life was more than enough to ruin her emotionally, and she is still affected by the same character. Even if that's not the case, she ate her stepfather's flesh. The flesh of the person who brought her back from the realm of the dead.

[There's a maid mentioned in the dairy dismantling your father's body, is she perhaps....]

[Yes, that's me. Master gave me a strict order to so]

Wiping her hands after being done from the boy's dismantling task, Kanade answered me with a bright smile.

[Kanade was both the maid and the assistant of my stepfather. She's the only one who takes care of chopping off the corpses for the sake of his research and separate the meat from the bones for the Shishikuibana. In the end, he entrusted her to look after me as his last order. It's quite possible that he taught her the process of dismantling because he was planning on sacrificing himself for me from the very start]

[That's right, every day, Master brought with him a new corpse. Thanks to him I was able to learn new things. The extraction of blood, The correct way to remove the joints and the appropriate method to cook every single part. Thanks to master, I am now able to be useful for Miss]

[When he ordered you to dismantle the corpse for the first time, didn't you refuse or try to run away?]

[Why should I think about something like that?]

Kanade displayed a puzzled expression looking like a confused child.

[This girl's morals are not functioning. She doesn't recognize killing a person or dissembling a corpse as a wrong action. Something seemed to have happened in her past, but I don't know the detail and I didn't investigate about it. Her unique turn of mind was her qualifying asset for getting chosen by my father]

The mystery of Kanade's smooth skills was finally solved.

She was dealing with human flesh long before Erisa was revived as a Shishikuibana.

Thanks to her uncommon pattern of thinking, she was able to cheerfully achieve her job as if she was playing with flowers.

Her unwavering sincerity allowed her to be the perfect maid for Erisa.

[That was the truth behind me eating human flesh. The flesh is the factor connecting the Shishikuibana with life. Thus it represents the only food allowing me to maintain my existence. The Shishikuibana's constitution is constantly crumbling apart. Even at this moment that I'm talking to you, my body is steadily approaching death. Therefore, Consuming human flesh is the sole way to regenerate my dying cells]

[Is human flesh the only food you can eat? What's going to happen if you stopped eating it?]

[I do eat different things, but that's just in order to satisfy my tongue and appetite, it doesn't help in maintaining my body. If you cease providing the body with human flesh for a long while, your limbs will gradually start to rot from the tips then they will be accordingly torn off. The internal organs will dissolve like a decaying fruit. Next will be the end, no matter how much flesh you eat at that stage, it's going to be too late. I need to run with all my might if I want to remain. As a life form, I'm bound to feed on human flesh for the rest of my life, until my life span comes to an end]

[The rest of your life...]

[If only the Shishikuibana had a sly nature and enough physical strength to slaughter humans under cover of night, then it would be much easier to guarantee our necessary food. Unfortunately, besides the fact that we consume flesh, our strength and intelligence are the same as an ordinary human, which I find to be unfair]

Kanade was standing in the kitchen preparing Erisa's dinner. She threw into the pot, cabbage, potato, onion, shallot, pieces of celery and human fingers. Today's menu was the nightmare tasting home-made pot-au-feu. The secret ingredient was the nail's dirt.

[Of course, Iruse Misaki is no exception]

Erisa continues.

[It would be extremely irresponsible of you to turn her into a human and then tell her "you're free now so go live your own life". Releasing her means that you have to keep supplying her with human flesh exactly as you were doing so far. Of

course, it's up to you, whether you will force her to pay the cost of the food]

[I told you I can handle it. I'm staying together with Misaki for her entire life and I wouldn't let her soil her hands. Nothing will be changing, I will just have to murder people to keep her alive]

[You really have changed. Obtaining flesh leads to killing people. I wonder where did he go, that boy who had a pale face after witnessing Ando's delivered corpse]

Erisa, resting her cheeks on her hand, held an amazed expression.

[Anyway, I will approve of it. I've already stated to you before, those who made it this far wishing to revive the Shishikuibana weren't that many. However, that majority chose to abandon the Shishikuibana because they couldn't bear the constant sins of snatching away people's life. If not, the deed of casually and cautiously murdering others only increases the small responsibility you previously own and makes it even greater. Considering this huge burden you will need to take, I wouldn't really recommend you to—]

[You are opposing Misaki's resuscitation, not because of those cliched ideas like burden or responsibility, but because of another reason]

[What could you mean by that?]

[Isn't it because it's dangerous?]

Erisa indifferently gazed at me.

I had this belief from a while ago.

Probably, Ando didn't succeed at completely brainwashing the Shishikuibana.

I recall the eyes of his Shishikuibana when I was leaving.

Those were not the eyes of seeing someone off, nor were they the eyes of fear.

They were the eyes of resenting and hating Ando.

[If I told you it's dangerous, will you give up reviving Iruse Misaki?]

[You're not denying it, are you? Come to think of it, you didn't deny knowing Misaki's whereabouts when I inquired you for the first time. Erisa, you are naturally someone who doesn't lie]

[Don't get the wrong idea. I didn't say it was dangerous. If you cut the root, the

Shishikuibana will acquire an ego and begin moving independently, meaning that you gave birth to a new life. It's the same as recreating someone's life once again. Needless to talk about flesh, you will have to carry both her past and future as well. That's the resolution I'm implying]

[It's not a problem. Such a thing is not worthy to be called as resolution because I love Misaki]

Mentioning the word "love", Erisa's weakly blushing face held no fever.

She froze her sight on me for a moment then gave up saying "the word young love makes you blind was true after all".

[This is indeed a difficult path for a high school graduate to walk through, but if you're willing to choose it that badly, then I don't have the right to stop you from doing so. It wouldn't matter to me either way if you get swallowed up to the depth of the swamp. But let me tell you one thing, Kuuya. No matter how cruel the end could be, don't avert your eyes from it and face it without regret]

[What you mean?]

[Reality is not as sweet as you think, that's what I mean]

Those obscure words she unveiled gave me an anxious feeling.

She's bad at lying, but on the other hand, she takes a long time before revealing the entire truth.

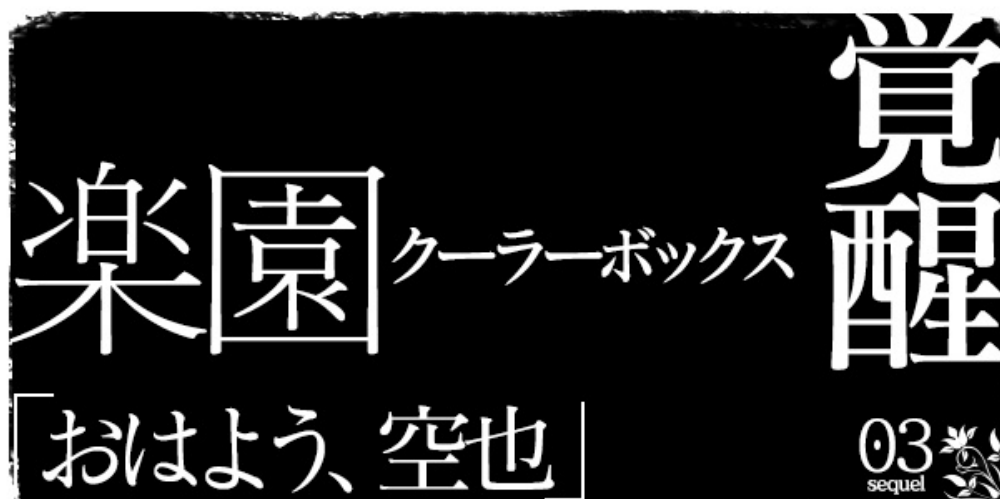
Perceiving my disturbance, Erisa brought back her usual cynical grin.

[A famous coach of a boxing champion said the same thing, "Don't desire for too much. Corruption starts from that point"]

Following it with a whispering voice.

[Although, this expression doesn't hold any significance for the current you]

Chapter 11



Eden- Cooler-box- Awakning- [Morning, Kuuya]

The early morning light flowed inside the room.

The night has ended with me not sleeping a wink, but my mood was as composed as this morning's stretching sky.

That is because I decided to turn Misaki into a human today.

I took out Misaki from the closet. Her flower had completely withered and fell next to her feet. After taking back her perfect former appearance, she became heavier than expected giving me a hard time dragging the pot without knocking it.

Misaki who was holding her knees and bathing in the dawn light possessed an elegant ambiance, as if she ran away from a renaissance painting. Her mysterious composition gave me the impression of the falling feathers of an angel flying in the far away sky.

I picked up the knife from my desk and held it near Misaki's foot.

Ando turned his Shishikuibana into slaves using violence.

But I'm different.

I'm approaching Misaki with deep affection. I brought her up to love me. What's important for a man and a woman to be joined together is not a thorny whip, they're the arms that will gently hold your partner.

It's okay. There's no problem.

I took a deep breath, prepared myself emotionally and turned the knife edge toward the sole of her foot.

At the instant I pulled the knife, Erisa's warning sprang back to my mind, however I didn't stop and carefully kept on cutting off the root.

Murdering three people so far, not even a fragment of guilt have remained in me at this point.

I don't care about what's waiting for me after performing this deed.

I'm calling back Misaki in the way I think is right for me.

I shall overcome any hardship for that sake. If something is going to happen later, I will try to deal with it at that time.

The root was unexpectedly soft and a weak response transmitted to my hand as if I was cutting a spider thread. The root which was tying up Misaki with the pot quickly disappeared.

Her empty eyes started shining and she showed a faint smile.

Maybe Venus's awakening held the same mysterious feeling. That thought crossed my mind upon observing Misaki's elegant awakening.

[Morning, Kuuya]

This was the first time she called me by my first name.

Her figure in front of me suddenly grew blurred. My pupil was clouded by tears of gratitude.

[Why are you crying?]

[I'm happy. Being able to exchange words with Misaki like this makes unbelievably happy]

[Don't say weird things like that, Kuuya]

I averted my face trying to hide my tears, stood up and handed Misaki a loungewear. Her naked appearance is a poison for the eyes. I would be lying if I said I'm not turned on by her dazzling nude body, but the resolution of honestly following my lust is still a bit far from me at the present moment.

Without seeming to mind being naked, Misaki put on the loungewear. The sleeve and the cuff were a bit short though, the width was exact. I realize again that my body is too thin.

[Right, Misaki, are you perhaps hungry? I can make something for you]

[Eh, Kuuya's home cooking? Yes, yes I want to try it]

Recalling that I didn't feed her anything last night, I carried the box containing the flesh and ran down to the kitchen. I only gave her raw meat when she was a Shishikuibana, but now I want to prepare a decent dish for her. She's a human after all.

The menu is minced flesh along with finely chopped vegetables, a rare omelet. Unfortunately, I didn't find the mincer and ended up cutting the meat as well. I recall Haruhito's face when he tasted my cooking and felt a bit uneasy.

This time, I cooked in the same way that I observed Haruhito cooks. Careful to not use too much flavoring and not over burn it, I somehow finished the omelet making use of Haruhito's skills that I remembered.

I added ketchup to the omelet on the plate and delivered it to Misaki.

She carried it to her mouth, chewed it and swallowed it. What a nervous moment.

[Ah, delicious]

[Really?]

[Yes, the ingredients are both salty and sweet and the eggs are soft, it's really delicious]

Leaving aside the doubt of whether she's just flattering me or it really being delicious, I was honestly happy to get praised for my cooking. Maybe I developed a good taste after feeding on Haruhito's cooking for four years and a half.

Apparently, my culinary skills leveled up to a point where I shouldn't be ashamed of showing it to people anymore.

I thought she would be displeased by the use of meat in the morning, but she's happily eating it. I made a bite on my butter toast while watching over her satisfied face enjoying the flesh omelet.

[Hm, Kuuya, you're not eating an omelet?]

[No, there was only one egg left]

[Then let's split this one between us]

A strain like shaved ice ran through my back from getting cornered by Misaki.

[No I'm fine, you can have it all]

Misaki answered with "even though it's delicious" to my positive decline and let the topic pass.

It would be unbearable to eat Isezaki's flesh for breakfast.

[But that's pretty weird]

Misaki spoke those few words after clearing her plate.

[What was I doing in Kuuya's room? I have no memories of coming to this place. It feels like I'm forgetting something important]

A second strain ran through my back.

Misaki spent the last month as a Shishikuibana, there's no way she could remember what happened during that period. The concept of her boyfriend is gone because I fixed that idea in her brain by my constant whispering. However, that's just an addition.

Explaining her the whole story up to now is also an impossible option. I mean, It's the same as informing her of the shocking truth that she's not a human anymore.

[It's because, you see, last night you fell down the stairs and hit your head causing you to lose your memories. I had a hard time carrying you to my house you know]

Come on, you could make up a better lie than this. I scolded myself with cold sweat running through my body. Too many contradictions could be noticed with this, why didn't I bring her to a hospital and where's the wound on her head? I'm

at a loss in making a reasonable explanation for finding herself naked too. There's no way she will agree with such a ridiculous lie.

There shouldn't be a way.

Yet she easily let it slip with, "Is that so. Well, it's just a trivial fact anyway", along with a short laugh. Her docile character lets me down instead.

In the end, I wasn't able to give her an agreeable reason for her lost memories or for staying in my house, but regarding being together with me, she didn't raise the least doubt.

After that, we spent three days in the house.

Isezaki's name was never referred during that while.

Contrary to my expectations, Misaki had the kind of personality who strikes her words with no reserve.

[Kuuya, are you a priest in pursuit of knowledge?]

[What does that have to do with me?]

[Your room doesn't have a TV or a computer, there's not even one erotic book around. I thought you were the type who can't control his sexual desires]

[I don't think a girl should talk about stuff like this with a guy of the same age]

[You're speaking like an old man, Kuuya. Those type of girls have been extinguished a long time ago. Your ideas are old fashioned and your desires are dead just like an old man]

[I believe I'm normal for my age]

[No, that's not normal. In the first place, how are you not laying a hand on this defenseless cutie in front of you? Didn't you ever think about pushing me down? That's definitely not normal for a man close to his twenties]

[It's not normal to call yourself as cutie either]

[Those kinds of comebacks were made for boys like you, weren't they. Your appearance is that of a child while your inside is that of an old man, and to top it off, a Ronin life]

[That doesn't make sense!]

We had conversations about everything we thought of. I was already fed up with Erisa's wicked tongue, but Misaki ended up being at the same level. She mercilessly spoke up anything on her mind playing on my feelings. Yet I enjoyed talking with her. At least it's much better than those awkward conversations I have with unknown people. But the definite difference between her and Erisa is the affection contained in her words. Erisa's words gouge out the heart while Misaki's heal it instead.

I stopped going to the library, deciding to study at home these days. Having Misaki helping me with my English, I realized my comprehension ability wasn't that bad.

[Maybe you're the type who can't make a good performance under pressure and unease]

I don't remember feeling pressed or uneasy when I was taking my tests, but the regretful idea that I will be separated with Misaki in one month had a strong presence at that time. Who knows, it could be the main reason behind my failing on the tests.

We spent our days at the same room, chatted all the time and slept in the same bed. It wasn't because of my dead desires that I didn't touch her in the night, but because of my lack of self-confidence.

I became used to making three meals a day for Misaki and leaving the rest for Rosari at night. Every time, Misaki ate the entire meal I made for her. There were some occasions when I messed up the ingredients, but she still ate it without complaints to the point where I was astonished by her irregular gluttony despite her slender body. I was hoping Erisa's advice about the Shishikuibana being a glutton wasn't true.

Thus, our peaceful moments proceeded leisurely.

Thinking about it again, the last few days were similar to the Eden for me, supreme blissful days. A treasure sealed in my heart giving me painful times whenever I recall it later.

After all, the Eden didn't allow my stay for too long.

Those carrying sin always end up getting expelled.

In the breakfast of the fourth morning, Misaki suggested we go on a date.

[How about we go out sometimes? It's too much of a waste to stay home in this nice weather. Try to forget about your studies for a day at least and have fun]

Her invitation made me very glad, but for me who never experienced going out with a girl in the street, I didn't have the confidence to maintain the enjoyable mood.

[Such an idiot. You're not a street performer to be worried about ruining the mood. It will be all good if you were able to enjoy yourself for the whole day. If you enjoy your time, then that will make me happy too]

Misaki brightly declared so to my expressed concerns.

Her words helped at pushing me and pressing me at the same time forcing today's schedule to be settled.

[With that out of the way, I need to return home and take a change of clothes. I mean, it would be pretty embarrassing to walk around the town with this appearance]

Gazing at the bashful Misaki, I started pondering about what I should be wearing too, when suddenly the sound of the knocking on the door leaped to my ears.

[I'm back! You awake Kuuya?]

It was Haruhito.

I wouldn't call it a good timing, but his absence for Misaki's revival was a helpful thing.

In front of me is a good looking young woman wearing my clothes.

How am I supposed to explain to him this situation? How should I introduce him to Misaki?

Thinking over and over about what to do, Haruhito opened the door and entered.

The time stopped for an instant in the kitchen.

[O, oh my. Hello there]

Getting all confused by the unforeseen guest, Haruhito dropped his usual speaking manner and made a ridiculous greeting. Misaki answered with a “sorry for the intrusion” and bowed her head.

[So yeah, Kuuya, I’m going back for now. Let’s meet later]

Leaving behind her lovely smile, Misaki left the house.

I guess having Haruhito shooting a barrage of questions at me after that is a natural outcome.

[I thought you were a kid this whole time, but I guess you’re a man now, huh]

When I tried to honestly state our relationship to him, Haruhito returned me a smirk and said as such.

Telling him sincerely that I have a date tonight with Misaki, he said “Ooh, of course, just go, go, who cares about those studies anyway” and cheerfully pulled out two bills of ten thousand yen from his wallet.

[Just accept them. You may end up needing them at some point you know]

His unclean expression clearly divulged where I may need all that money. Leaving out this strange behavior for a middle aged man, I was delighted by his offer and gladly accepted the two bills.

I went back to my room and dressed up for the date. A white shirt and a gray jersey, as for the bottoms, I went for straight jeans. For someone at my age, my closet offered very few dressing choices.

In the middle of changing my clothes, the pot I put away entered my vision field.

Only a few days ago, Misaki was sitting on top of this pot, eating flesh with a blank expression and silent mouth.

Now, I’m having a date with that Misaki. Such an emotional feeling.

After this date, I’m going to bring her back home and take permission from Haruhito to let her stay along. I had no basis of him approving, but at that time, I sensed that everything will advance smoothly.

On my way down leaving the entrance, I bumped into the delivery guy carrying a box wrapped in styrofoam.

[Could you please sign over here?]

Signing down, I checked the delivery box to find Haruhito's name on it.

When I handed it to him, he replied with "oh, that was fast", unsealed the box and took out a lump of something from the inside.

[What's that?]

[I found a great meat trader on my last work trip and asked for it to be delivered instead of increasing my luggage]

A new lump of meat was inserted again to the refrigerator. I moved my sight near the sink and noticed a cooler box. Instantly, my heart leaped from its place. Isezaki and the run over boy's flesh are placed in there. I didn't have the time to take it back to my room due to Haruhito's sudden return.

What's going to happen if he recognizes it? Cold sweat started running through my whole body.

[You still have time? Weren't you going out?]

Checking the wall clock, Haruhito urged me to go out. Fortunately, he doesn't seem to be doubting the cooler box.

Let's just pray that he wouldn't open it up.

Fifteen minutes on the train and three minutes walking out from the station, I finally arrived at the appointed location fifteen minutes before the exact time.

I spent the leftover minutes watching people coming and going in the town. Seeing all these people walking under the summer sunlight sometimes, I couldn't believe that I was at their center.

When the traffic light turned green, the crowd standing on the road path gushed out to the street. Inside of that swarm, I could see a shadow of someone half running toward me.

[I'm back]

The long haired Misaki who arrived at the meeting place was wearing black trousers, a cream colored jersey and a transparent summer cardigan. Despite wearing this simple outfit, she looked more brilliant and prettier than any of the women passing by near.

[Shall we go then?]

I held hands with Misaki. Not just seizing hands, but entangling our fingers together, in other words, lovers hand holding. It felt the best to tie hands with her that way until I started thinking about my reflection for other people.

There's no need to argue about Misaki's grace. Her small face and well-ordered body would undoubtedly snatch the sight of every man passing near. Since she possesses a slender figure taller than me a little bit, she's probably wearing a sandal out of consideration. Should I feel miserable or sorry? I was caught by a complicated mood.

A queen and a mouse. A rose and a stone. Saying it favorably, it would look something like a sister and her little brother.

Considering the off balance between our appearance, I couldn't help but think people didn't look at me with those kinds of eyes.

[Hey hey, Kuuya, let's eat some crepes. That shop over there has some really delicious crepes]

Leaving my gloom aside, Misaki pointed to a crepe stand and raised her voice making it hard for me to refuse, just like how it's hard to stare at the blazing rays of the sun. She then ordered the double cream, grenadine limited crepe. Following her, I ordered the same thing too. Witnessing Misaki cheerfully biting into the crepe, my mood increased as a result. And as expected from her choice, the taste was also outstanding.

About the pomegranates of the grenadine. There's a common saying about its taste being similar to human flesh, so it was quite the strange coincidence for her to order it in the crepe. For some reason, it appeared as if she did that on purpose.

[Ah, the cream fell on my clothes]

Misaki said so with a pitiable voice. Her cardigan was tainted by the white and rose cream falling from the crepe.

[If you don't wipe it will turn into a stain]

When I was about to take out a handkerchief from my pocket, Misaki, unhesitating, dressed out the cardigan.

[I don't need it so I will throw it]

[Are you sure? If you wash it will turn back to normal you know]

Without minding my bewildered opinion, she rolled it up and threw it in a trash box set along the footpath.

[Okay then, let's go to the next place]

Seeing Misaki's cheerful face, an inexplicable unease crawled up onto me.

Rather than I wasn't grasping her character, it could be said that I didn't have a single idea about it. While I'm on my way deepening my relation with her, she's showing me various sides of her personality. Likable sides and undesirable sides. I'm not an esper, so naturally, I wouldn't be able to see through what's going on in her mind. I was intending to embrace everything about Misaki, But now, I wonder if I could keep that intention after touching the dark sides she's concealing.

Considering these heavy thoughts, we kept parading through the town together. We didn't watch a movie or go enjoy shopping. All we did was walking around while talking about the different stuff we see on our way. It was hard to call a stroll as a date, however, Misaki seemed to be enjoying her time. Again, by only looking at her smiling face, the earlier unease gradually faded out in my heart. Around the sunset, I completely forget about the fact of her throwing out the cardigan.

[Ah, it's a florist!]

Walking our way through a lonely alley, a street stall entered my sight as she stated.

It was Erisa's stall.

[Oh my, it's been quite a while]

Erisa's face turned black for a moment upon recognizing me and Misaki, but she immediately went back to her usual appearance. I can somehow read her expression saying something like "what are you doing at such a place?".

[It's rare to find a florist opening a shop at this time and place]

[I do that occasionally to fully enjoy the summer air. I like summer evenings]

Well, I didn't know you had such an elegant interest. I forced back that sentence before it slipped from my mouth. Erisa seemed to be acting as if she doesn't know me. I'm not sure why she's taking this attitude, though, it is surely better to keep quiet about that point. I can easily foresee Misaki ambushing me with questions if she knew we were acquaintances.

Talkativeness will backfire on me. If I keep quiet, nothing will occur.

Misaki was gazing at the flowers when she abruptly raised her head as if she recalled something.

[Come to think about it, we didn't exchange our names. We've known each other for a long time and all]

Erisa already knows Misaki's name, but she still answered with a "yeah, you're right" and nodded to her words.

[My name is Iruse Misaki, nice to meet you once again, Florist]

[Jinga Erisa, glad to meet you too, Miss Iruse]

Watching over both of them introducing themselves, my legs started to hurt from standing.

Erisa was called by Misaki to the construction site last month, to find her dead when arriving. I was waiting for a reference to that time to pop up in the conversation, nevertheless, They didn't show any sign of touching that matter. Seeing their figures harmoniously talking about several topics, I felt like I gaped at the lurking abyss in a woman's heart.

[By the way Miss Erisa, what flower would you recommend for me today?]

[How about this one?]

Erisa's suggestion was a white refined flower blooming while covering its stalk.

[Amabilis. It's also called as Midi Phalaenopsis. It outshines the large Phalaenopsis with its small garland. It doesn't feel like a hindrance when placed at the window frame which makes it popular nowadays]

[What a beautiful flower]

Misaki viewed the Amabilis looking entranced by its beauty. I was thinking about purchasing it for her as a present, but Erisa lifted the pot and pointed it toward her before I did so.

[You can have it if you like. Consider it as my gratitude for having you often purchasing my flowers]

[Eh, are you sure?]

Misaki, with an excited voice, gleefully fixed her eyes on Erisa who was wrapping the pot in a bag.

Anyone who'd see Erisa's elegant manner of handling her flowers wouldn't be imagining her devouring human flesh every day, I wonder.

[Ah, right, Kuuya, can you come home with me?]

After receiving the bag from Erisa, Misaki directed her attention to me.

[Your house?]

I was always interested in Misaki's house, therefore, I agreed after the next reply.

When we were about to leave the stall, Erisa called me back with "hey, boyfriend, can I have a moment?".

I requested Misaki to walk ahead of me and rushed out to Erisa who then softly whispered into my ear.

I tried to ask her again what she meant, but she sent me back answering "have a lovely night", along with a typical business smile.

[What, did something happen?]

[Yeah, she told me to take care of my cute girlfriend]

[Oh come on, I'm not that cute~]

Misaki continued to talk about different matters along the road, but my brain was overflowed, pondering about Erisa's implication in her last whisper.

Chapter 12



Collection- memories- [it will only hurt for a moment]- knife

At the time we arrived at a residential area after clearing a mountainous district, the sun had already sunk behind the mountains. Misaki's house was at the inner part of the area connected with a forest.

[There are no street lights in here, so it get's pretty dark once the night falls]

Exactly as Misaki stated, the night street sure felt unreliable without lightning. I remembered the declining town where I live. Misaki's town is expected to prosper in the future, while mine had already reached its decaying stage. In exchange for the darkness that gets chased out from the new towns, it gradually keeps expanding in the old ones.

Misaki's house was a modern two storied building. The garden had trees growing and flowers proudly blooming for their landlord.

[I'm going to prepare some tea, go wait for me in my room. It's the first one you will see on the second floor]

Misaki, holding the Amaris she received from Erisa, disappeared in the interior of the house.

Doing as I was told, I opened the door of Misaki's room while trying my best to control my throbbing heart. It was my first time entering the room of a girl in my age, leaving aside that it was Misaki's room.

The inside was neatly arranged and brimming of freshness. A shelf was installed on the wall with various displayed accessories, shade lamps, bracelets, aroma pots, and pen stands. They all gave the impression of being homemade and their simple design showed that they were made from the same materials, giving the room a fashionable style.

Clothes and underwear were scattered above the bed and makeup tools were disordered on the dresser. When I imagine Misaki preparing for the date in a rush to make it in time, an unconscious grin escapes my control.

[I forgot to place the Amabilis in the room first]

Misaki appeared carrying a tray with tea in one hand and holding the flower with the other one. Placing the Amabilis on the window frame she mumbled in a low voice wondering whether it will look attractive in the daytime.

[Is this your collection?]

Immediately after pointing to the handicraft on the shelf, Misaki puffed her chest as if she was waiting for that question.

[Rather than a collection, I made all of it by myself. I've been collecting the material and crafting them from my middle school days]

[Hee, that's amazing. I didn't know you had such a talent]

Well, I still don't know anything about you anyway.

[I work on them in a cabin near the house since space and tools are necessary, not to mention that crafting them inside will make a mess of the whole place]

[You also have a cabin? It seems like you're taking your stuff seriously, aren't you?]

[Do you want to go take a look?]

Going with the flow of the conversation, I ended up moving to Misaki's cabin. Judging from her excitement, perhaps she invited me to see her works and cabin as the main purpose.

I proceeded behind Misaki who was holding a flashlight in her hands. The foliage above our heads didn't permit the least amount of light to make it past, rendering the dark path hard enough to cross. By clearing my ears, I could also hear the sound of running water. Apparently, there's a small river near us, according to Misaki.

We finally arrived at a small hovel, a place a bit too cramped to be a residence. The roof was built from corrugated zinc and had countless holes. Obviously, it wouldn't stand a chance against rain.

[To be honest, I didn't want to show it to anybody in this shape, but I made an exception for you, Kuuya]

[What was this place originally?]

[I'm not very sure, it was something like a storage room used by some forestry workers. It looked like it was abandoned, so I'm secretly using it now]

Right after opening the door with a creaking sound, a lot of things entered my field of vision. Rusty tools, fertilizers, and composts were scattered everywhere in the moldy room.

The workplace was behind a door in the inner part. Misaki entered the room first and turned on a lantern switch hanging from the ceiling. It seems there's no electricity. Somehow, I started to faintly recall the thousand yen grandma.

Excluding the single window, there were some furnitures installed here and there, though, all of them were nothing but empty shelves. A lathe and a milling machine were set in the corner covered with vinyl sheets suggesting that they were used not too long ago.

A big wooden table was placed in the center and above it were placed some relatively new looking knives waiting for their turn to be used. One-third of the table was covered by a cloth hiding its inside.

[This is the leather I'm using to make them. It takes a lot of troubles to make it this clean]

[Wait, don't tell me, you also make your own leather?]

Misaki made a giggle to my surprised expression and put the leather on her palm.

[Well, it's indeed quite difficult to make it. The process is long and requires much effort, but the joy I feel once I finish making it makes the whole thing worth it]

[You must be spending a considerable amount of time to make it like this]

[The longest part is separating the fat without scratching the leather I guess. If I leave even a small amount, it will oxidize and get maggot-infested afterwards]

[Such a sensitive task]

[If you laze around at that part, it will have a huge effect in the end. If you're too slow the leather will deteriorate and getting too impatient will risk to wound it. You need both prudence and speed in order to perfectly achieve the job]

[I really didn't imagine you'd have such a special skill]

Misaki raised a triumphant air due to my praising words.

[Then, after chipping the fat, you need to soak it in a special chemical medicine for a few months to turn into a good leather. The medicine's ingredients are a secret by the way. Even though I was never asked about it. Next, you stretch it on the back of a chair below the lamp shade. By using a lamp of warm colors, the light reflects a beautiful appearance on the pores and guarantees the good quality of the leather]

Watching Misaki freely explaining the process to me, I felt a bit happy. The unease I had earlier in the town turned into an enjoyment thanks to discovering another new side of her. I guess it will be normal to face those kinds of worries, get angry, and sometimes even enter into an argument with her. But the moments when I will be delighted and laugh from the bottom of my heart are going visit at the same frequency for sure. The future is not something to be scared of, the fact that we don't know what's waiting for us is what makes it entertaining.

[But this leather here you see, I just can't bring myself to accept it]

Misaki picked a piece of leather from its edge. The part she pointed to had a wound similar to a sunburn. The amber color in that scratch made it look very strange.

[I didn't realize when I was peeling off the skin. But when the tan became visible later It I regretted killing it for nothing in the first place]

[Killing it? You mean you also go out of your way to kill the animal and obtain its leather?]

I replied with a high pitched voice.

[There's a limit to how enthusiastic you can get. To begin with, How do you acquire it?]

[That's easy. All you need to do is randomly walk around. When you find one, just call for it, then it will follow you until this place]

[It's like you're using Hamelin's flute]

That's interesting. I wonder what animal possessing this leather live near these mountains.

[Buy wait, wouldn't you face troubles if you kill it by yourself? You can simply deliver it to a specialist and he will give you back the leather you know]

[I have no clue about this specialist. I mean, I'm not sure if there's someone who'd accept a human dismantling task]

—What did she just say?!

Before I asked her again, Misaki swiftly embraced me.

Her breath tickled my ears.

[Sorry Kuuya, it will hurt for only a moment]

A simultaneous gouging pain with her whisper ran through my flank resulting in me collapsing.

Tormenting pain and confusion swirled in my head.

What the heck happened?

Why am I collapsing?

Misaki, why are you looking down at me with those cold eyes?

The old phone she was seizing in her right hand released a dangerous looking purple lightning.

[Did you know, stun guns have lots of styles and shapes. Out of all of them, the phone model is the handiest, you can act as if you're talking and take your opponent by surprise. You don't need a special permission to use it either, as for the efficacy, you're currently experiencing it. By merely running a spark of

electricity, you lose control over your body]

Having my head all hazy, I barely listened to Misaki's statement of efficiency. Precisely as she said, all my muscles are paralyzed halting me from moving my arms. My flank is continuously dispatching an explosive pain to my brain and disturbing my thought. If a female college student is able to obtain such a disturbing weapon, I wouldn't really support the actual Japanese law.

[To be honest, I didn't want to do this. I wished to live a carefree life in your house. But those feelings were blown off once I met Jinka Erisa again. At that moment, I remembered that I still had something left to achieve]

I can't keep with her story because of the pain and numbness in my brain caused by the electric shock.

In the first place, why did Erisa's name pop up here?

[I'm not going to let her live. But before I go trouble her again, It's important to take care of my regrets first. So yeah, Kuuya, could you die for me?]

[Wa-wa-wait!! Why am I supposed to die?]

I was finally able to squeeze out those words with my trembling voice.

[You're really dense, aren't you kuuya?]

Misaki's amazed voice hovered in the dark corner of the room. Her tone was as cool as the cold water of a freezing lake.

[Just to let you know Kuuya, I always watched you these last three years. It's true that I had an enjoyable time with Akira, but I couldn't find what I really craved in him. Frankly speaking, I thought of him as an annoying person. Sometimes, it was awfully painful to be recognized and applauded as the official couple of the class with him]

I couldn't control my astonishment hearing Isezaki's name from her mouth.

How is that even possible.

I certainly did whisper it in her ears, Isezaki Akira doesn't exist. There shouldn't be any remaining memories of him in her brain.

[Why is it me and not him? Did I ever do something offending you?]

[Did something offensive? Hm, that's pretty weird. If I'm not wrong, I was

constantly loved and protected by you kuuya wasn't I? And I should be loving you forever as well, right? By the way, who did you mean by "him"?)

Misaki's face was filled with a distorted grin she never showed me before.

I was assailed by a violent chill as if my blood was flowing out from my entire body.

She didn't only keep her memories about Isezaki, but she also maintained the false ones I planted in her.

To top it off, she can distinguish both of them without confusion. What's happening to Misaki exceeded my level of comprehension.

[You know, the reason you attracted my attention was because despite being a man, you had a white, fine and smooth skin. The first time I noticed it was in the fall of the first year of high school, the day when you confessed your love to me. And remember what was my reply? "I never saw you from that kind of light, Mamesaki". You wouldn't usually fall in love with a raw material. It's like you're waiting for a person to fall for a chicken used for its eggs]

[What in the world do you mean by raw material?]

[Just look at this room. Can't you realize such an obvious fact? You're really dense, Kuuya]

I think I would never forget that cruel voice she directed to me like a gleaming sword while giving me her scorning glances.

[I am going to kill you and peel off your skin, that's what I mean]

Misaki leisurely turned her back to me who didn't have much difference from a harmless hornworm at that time, and grabbed a rustic knife unbefitting of her looks from the shelf.

[Usually, I would have done this near the river leaving this place clean. Welp, it's a dull cabin anyway, I guess it doesn't really matter, although it would be a pain to get rid of the unnecessary parts later]

A sharp sound in the air echoed by her waving the knife.

Erisa's first words played back on my mind.

—That girl is a monster, be careful.

With her majestic steps, Misaki leisurely approached me, looking like a beast licking its' lips and drawing near its' captured prey.

[Be relieved, I'm not interested in torturing people before finishing them. If you stay quiet, I will easily slit your throat, blood will quickly come out like a water fountain and it will be the end. After I check that your heart has stopped, I will then neatly peel off your skin. Hey Kuuya, what do you want to become? A lamp? A cushion? A place mat? Or shall I turn you into a diary cover? I can write my daily life events under that light lamp made from the skin and bones of a college student and while smelling the fragrance of the aroma pot fabricated from the shaved cranium of a kindergartener. It will sound like I'm talking to you at that time. Ah, I may as well make a pen from your finger then. How does it sound? Writing down my life events addressed to you with a pen made from your finger and calling it a night with a kiss on the front cover. Don't you think that's a lovely idea?]

Raising her innocent voice, she kept on attentively spewing her disturbing imagination. Meanwhile, I desperately searched for a way to rescue myself. During the time she was talking to herself, my body had considerably recovered. It was still impossible for me to escape, however, I could at least move my arms and legs. I examined my surroundings looking for something to be used as a weapon nearby, but unfortunately, the ground was full of nothing but garbage and piled up dust.

[I've been doing this from my middle school days so I'm used to killing people without making them suffer. Although I did mess up a bit with that child three years ago]

Speaking of three years ago, I remembered the incident of the orphan child in the next town. His corpse was missing its left arm and had his back skin tragically torn off.

[I never thought I would be meeting the criminal of that unsettled case]

[I don't give signs. But I can accept your skin instead. You know, your skin's quality is the best, Kuuya. It's number one for me out of all the materials I saw. I will thoughtfully tan it for you so you can rest in peace]

Misaki's face was too close, to the point where I felt her breath.

I charged most of my remaining strength to my legs and stretched them to blow her off.

Her body received the unforeseen blow and bumped into the table, resulting in

the operating tools falling on the ground.

Making use of that opportunity, I stood up relying on my unsteady legs.

When only a few steps were left for me to make it to the door, Misaki pinioned me.

I tried to shake her off left and right using my barely mobilized body but she didn't show a sign of letting go. It feels like I got caught in a spider web.

[Don't wriggle and die already!!]

Along with her demonic roar, Misaki thrust the knife edge against my neck. An assault filled with killing intent rather than love struck a sharp blade in my neck instead of a kiss. I'm experiencing a deadly black love comedy.

Once again, I rolled on the floor and attempted my best to make it out of her binding.

Misaki's legs started to faintly shake.

I imitated a sumo wrestling technique and with all my might, jumped aiming my back toward Misaki, then sank my entire weight above her.

Fortunate for me and unluckily for her, an iron machine tool was set in the place where we collapsed.

A dull stabbing sound echoed in the room.

Having Misaki crushed beneath me, we both fell to the ground.

I depended on my wobbly legs to somehow stand up again and nervously rubbed my neck ascertaining the wound's condition.

I didn't find any cut trace.

I reverted my sight to Misaki who dropped the knife from her hands. Her slender limbs were convulsed. In the center of her head, blood petals were slowly crawling on the ground.

I remained standing in a daze and gazing down on Misaki who wasn't moving anymore, looking like a mannequin.

Her half opened eyes were blank and her white teeth were peeking from her lips.

Except the blood rushing out of her head, her body was clean and unharmed. She looked as if she was about to wake up if I called her, answering me with her cheerful voice “Morning Kuuya, what’s for breakfast today?”

Misaki has died again.

Exceeding the sorrow of losing her for the second time, my heart was raging from anguish, as if it was getting battered by a storm.

Where did I go wrong?

What did I miss up?

Why did I end up murdering her?

The open-hearted Misaki of the high school days. Misaki who transfigured into a bewitching adult. Misaki who drank my blood and fed on flesh. Misaki who bloomed a flower in my room. Misaki who loved me and acted as my lover. Misaki who held Isezaki’s memories. Misaki who joyfully talked about her strange hobby. Misaki who brandished a knife and tried to kill me.

I wonder which Misaki was the real one.

I became unable to discern what happened.

Chapter 13



metal bat- A new seed- Ovary

Leaving Misaki's corpse behind, I dragged my stiffened body and returned back home. Both my mind and body were exhausted to the utmost having experienced such a long day, however, falling asleep senseless in that dilapidated cabin next to her was out of the question.

Haruhito was in the living room lying on the sofa and watching TV while using his elbow as a pillow.

[Eh? I thought you were not coming back tonight—]

Probably because he noticed my depressed expression, Haruhito halted his words in midway.

He then jumped up from the sofa and went to the kitchen.

[Did you eat something yet?]

Replying with a short, “No”, Haruhito picked a cutlet placed on the table and warmed it using the microwave oven.

The weak sound of the turntable moving reverberated in the silent kitchen.

[Well, yeah, you see...]

Unable to endure the heavy silence anymore, Haruhito, for the first time in a long while, started talking around in a lost manner.

[Life is full of wounding events. Getting bloodstained or covered in wounds is not that bad. Receiving an injury will result in a trace remaining, but that trace you see, it helps to avoid getting injured at the same place again. That’s how a person grows up. Having a lot of scars is evidence of amassed experience]

The microwave finished the warming right after Haruhito ended his words.

He took the cutlet letting out steam and placed it on the table once again.

[That’s why you need to keep acquiring experience while you’re still young. Learn how to heal your wounds because recovering gets slower the older you get. The girl I saw this morning was indeed cute, but it seems your affinity wasn’t compatible, you just had a poor chance this time. There are countless women in the earth. All you need to do is get over—]

[You’re wrong, I wasn’t rejected]

Realizing that he hastily jumped over to the conclusion, Haruhito made a bitter smile.

[A, Aah, I see! A quarrel was it? You could’ve told me so earlier you know. I thought for sure that you were rebuffed by that girl. I’m not sure what’s the problem, but don’t let it get you down. It’s much better than being dumped after all]

Haruhito raised a cheerful voice to me who was keeping silent.

[It’s not the end of your friendship, you can think about a way to make up with her later. So yeah, don’t be dejected like that, c’mon now, eat the meal before it cools down]

There’s no possible way for Haruhito to guess the real reason for my dejection. And I’m not planning on speaking of it to him either.

I finished the evening meal which felt tasteless at that time, dragged myself as if I was walking in a dream, and left the house. Haruhito quietly allowed me to do so without asking me where I'm going.

I walked through the main road, spent thirty minutes on the way until I reached a familiar western style building. Lights were still visible from its windows.

[I am very sorry, we have already closed—]

Kanade stopped apologizing half-way. She was facing Erisa in front of the counter and checking into the register.

[What are you doing here at such a time. I thought you were definitely spending a hot night with your girlfriend]

I ignored Erisa's jeering and went directly to the core of the matter.

[I want a new seed]

Erisa returned a dubious face to my request. Kanade considered the situation and dived into the basement.

[What do you mean? Wasn't she healthy and all just now?]

[Yeah, she was healthy earlier. It's just that your misgiving hit the mark]

[So something did happen. Could you explain me the story?]

I then divulged everything about the four last days I spent with Misaki. Without forgetting the part where she tried to kill me in the cabin of course.

Hearing me out until the end, Erisa showed a face of being convinced.

[So that's how it is. I finally understood the reason for her following me around after hearing out your story. Iruse Misaki was striving for my body]

[Your body? What, you mean she is that type of girl?]

[Could you just tell me from where do you get these coarse ideas in such a situation? She assaulted you because she wanted to make a handicraft with your body, and the same thing applies for me too. When I say she's striving for my body, I mean it literally. She's aiming for my parts]

[How did you arrive at this conclusion?]

[The truth is, I faked some of the details about what actually happened when she called for me. It's not wrong that she called me out to meet her, However, the part about finding her dead was a lie. What really happened is that she tried to murder me]

Misaki attacked Erisa?

[At that evening, when I made it to the construction site, nobody was around. After I kept waiting for a good amount of time, I decided to go back my way thinking it was some sort of tease, when she suddenly appeared out of the blue raising a metal bat above her head. I was somehow able to dodge the first hit, but she didn't seem to be stopping anytime soon and persistently continued on attacking me. I then lured her to a spot stacked up with materials while avoiding her hits at the last moments. Fortunately, the managing of the spot was negligent, which lead to her unforeseen end]

[The missed strike you dodged hit the piled up materials instead resulting in her getting crushed beneath them. Said differently, you killed Misaki]

Erisa made a fed up face to my conclusion.

[She arbitrarily ruined herself. Even if I was the one who induced her to do so. But still, she was quite a beast. She didn't waver in the least in trying to murder me. That's why I also moved with the intention of snatching her life]

[—Why didn't you tell me about this in the first time?]

[Humans are living beings who only believe the things they want. If I told you the truth back then, you wouldn't have believed me and you'd still be blindly loving Iruse Misaki in any case]

[You could've at least handed me a warning or something at that time. Same thing applies for when we met in town. You could've spoken to me straight rather than leaving me hanging with your riddles]

[Do you really think you would have believed me if I expressed my honest opinion to you? If I warned you in a straight way, do you think you would have avoided tonight's event?]

Erisa's words were spot on.

Just like she said now, even if she told me the entire truth instead of concealing it for herself, I would have definitely denied it.

Besides, Erisa's hidden truth doesn't have anything to do with Misaki assaulting

me. And assuming that I knew what was going to occur, the only change that would have taken place is me dodging the stun gun.

[I did feel a faint killing intent left in her when you both visited my shop today, but that was confirmed, along with her objective of following me around right after hearing out your side of the story. Perhaps she was planning on attacking me again this time]

Erisa's skin was white and clear, similar to clay. For Misaki who doesn't permit the slightest stain, it was quite hard for her to look over Erisa who held a refined beauty. I guess it's safe to assume that her guess unfolds the complete truth.

[Crafting with human materials is a long labor process that requires considerable knowledge and skills. For her to accomplish such a difficult job alone, she must be pretty devoted to human craftsmanship]

Erisa moved behind the counter and sat on the stool.

[I'm not interested in the details of her work, however, her addiction and mindset are indeed intriguing. It's not a question of ugliness and beauty, but I wonder if she understands the meaning of using human parts as materials. Although I would like to pass on offering her my skin, I'd like to invite her to my place]

[I don't care about that. Tell me, are you going to give the seed or not?]

[Now that I know about her wicked obsession, I wouldn't recommend you to release her again. Apart from that, you need to think up a way to dispose of her body. The Shishikuibana's exterior appearance is similar to that of a human. It will be troublesome if it was to be seen by somebody else]

I slammed my hand against the counter.

[I'd do anything if I can obtain the seed. I'd even bring a new corpse if you ask me to do so. I don't want to abandon Misaki yet. Please, could you spare me a seed?]

[—Would you really do anything for that sake?]

Erisa's pupils released a very suspicious light.

Getting pressed down by the unusual mood, I gulped down my saliva and nodded.

[Bring me a corpse, that is my demand. However, the corpse should meet one condition. It should be a woman who has already passed her first menstruation and did not reach to her menopause yet. Accurately speaking, I want the ovary of a young woman. Aside of that, I'm not requiring anything special about the

appearance or the condition]

[A young woman's ovary.....]

I recalled Ando proudly saying something about a sanitary napkin found with the body he brought for the first time. He satisfied the requirements of obtaining the seed, which is delivering the corpse of a woman able to give birth.

Erisa added, "Ah, that's right", as if she remembered something.

[It's better to not ask the Mogura for help since they habitually choose the lower half for their compensation. You already know that from the time with that grandma. There's no better feast than the legs filled with muscles and genital organs for them]

[How am I supposed to do that then? You telling me to carry the body on my back?]

[This is not a comic story, you don't have to do anything like that. You can simply cut the corpse and pack it in a case just like Ando. You can even drag her alive to this shop before making any move. Do you still remember the woman who turned her husband into a Shishikuibana? She submitted to me her own ovary in order to do so. In short, If you can just bring me the ovary, as long as it's not rotten, I wouldn't complain about the body's condition]

I bitterly regretted asking. Unlike Ando, I don't have a fortune, nor do I have the skills of the Mogura.

All that I own is the firm resolution of reviving Misaki again.

[You said that you wouldn't mind any woman as long as she's young, right?]

[That is if she's able to give birth. I'm not sure whether you happen to know one or not though]

I have an idea about one.

The remaining problem is how I can successfully lure her to this place.

It is two AM currently.

I was in a small alley somewhere inside the red light district.

Only the infrequent voice of barking dogs and the sounds of the plants ruffled by the breeze could be heard on this peaceful summer night.

Standing next to a pole, I was waiting for a certain person.

Judging from the time, she should pass by this place soon enough, but I still can't discern her figure anywhere.

When I was about to give up and withdraw, footsteps sounds interrupted the silence around.

[Sari!]

Calling out for her, Sari made a startled expression and stood still.

Right after she realized that the calling voice was mine, her stiffened face took back its usual look.

[Eh, it's Kuuya! What are you doing here in the middle of the night?]

[I was waiting for you, Sari]

[Me?]

I used a serious voice tone to Sari who rounded her eyes.

[About the time I showed you....yeah, you apparently don't remember. My friend has died]

[Eeh, really!?!]

[I was looking for that friend this whole time until the body was discovered not too long ago]

[I see, that must feel hard for you]

Despite declaring the abrupt death of a person, Sari's reaction was too weak.

It was quite apparent that she didn't remember the slightest thing about me searching for Misaki.

[She was a very important friend to me. A friend who trusted me and allowed me to frankly speak up my mind to her. The shock was too strong, to the point where I didn't know what to do and left the house to walk aimlessly throughout the town]

[It sounds painful, doesn't it? Don't let get to you for too long, there, there~]

Sari gently stroked my hair.

Things are not progressing well.

The plan should advance to her "comforting" me at this rate.

Were my words lacking emotions, or maybe she saw through my lie?

It would be terrifying if it was the latter. I mean, that would mean she feigns being an idiot the entire time while grasping a hold on everything occurring nearby.

I can't argue with Ando's loss of faith in women if that was true.

In the first place, am I even able to cleverly lead a conversation with another woman? I felt ashamed of my hopeless love experience.

[I don't want to go back home]

I worked my head to finally put that much into words.

[I want to stay with someone until I settle down]

[Someone? Who?]

[With you, till morning]

In the end, I didn't happen to be the type who beats around the bush. I just honestly declared my thoughts. That was my only weapon after all.

And because of its simplicity, the effect was also immediate since Sari's eyes started to dart across.

[I will be scolded if I worked outside the store, but I will let that pass exceptionally for you, Kuuya]

I shouted in joy inside my heart to Sari's mutter.

She then entwined her arms around mine and puffed.

[Okay then, where do you want to go?]

The soapy scent emitted from Sari's body tickled my nose. The sense of her touching breasts was greater than what I imagined. If her intelligence was a little bit higher, she would definitely serve as a useful honey trap working in the secret services.

[The place is kind of far, is it fine? I can call a car if you want]

[You're well prepared. Don't tell me, are you taking me to those love hotels with hired cars?]

Such hotels don't exist in Japan to begin with.

[It's not high class, but I thought it's the ideal place for us to relax. A calm and peaceful location perfect for spending a single night]

[Really? It makes me very happy to know you were thinking this far about me]

Sari believed every single word of my irresponsible lies. Forgetting about her main purpose for accompanying me, her eyes continued sparkling in excitement.

I felt bad for deceiving her, however, there was no going back at this late timing. I already cast the die.

Walking our way leisurely through the dark road, the headlight of Erisa's car approached us.

When I glanced at Sari who was cheerfully cuddling me, somehow my heart chilled. The feeling of guilt I had when trying to persuade her earlier has significantly decreased by now.

I bet she didn't have the slightest foresight of me soon snatching away her life. It was arranged in the previous meeting to have her enter the basement room, thrust a knife in her neck and gouge her throat by stirring it up until she dies. I considered speeding up the process to let her pass away without much suffering, but then again, she would probably forget about her death several seconds later anyway.

Watching the approaching car of Erisa, I deeply apologized for what was going to happen to Sari.

Chapter 14



the depth of Hell- revelation- Dagger knife- [I am a human]

The streets, the crowds, and inside the trains were filled back up once again with students wearing uniforms.

I repeated the days of going to Misaki's house while acting as I was moving to the library. I'd have preferred to raise her at home instead, but Haruhito is there now. Honestly, concealing her in the house is too much of a pain, and even if I did so, Haruhito had already seen Misaki previously. I have no explanation ready for him in case he found out about the Shishikuibana.

It's now September.

The seed which I obtained by exchanging Sari's ovary had grown into a new Misaki above the pot waiting for its second awakening. It was fortunate that the ovary was in perfect condition. Receiving the seed, I told Erisa "You didn't stop me this time, did you?" but she replied with a shocked expression, "It's useless to

do so anyway”.

I then planted the seed in Misaki’s cut open head and dripped some blood. I also begged Erisa to share with me Sari’s flesh so I would have more time to gaze at Misaki to my heart’s content instead of going out to search for a new corpse.

Aside from picking up her head in the cabin, I didn’t go back there a second time. Though, I was blessed to find the necessary tools to behead her set all in one place. The remainder of the body was left rotting due to microbes and enzyme.

I tried to brainwash Misaki once again.

I made her forget about Isezaki for real this time.

To not assault me.

To love me from the bottom of her heart.

As if I was praying, I repeated this imprinting as long as I was awake.

Right after the flower fell, I started releasing Misaki.

As I was cutting the root, her eyebrow started to quiver.

[You were protecting me and loving me? How gross. I can’t believe you’re approaching me like that. And hey, could you stop staring at me? You’re disgusting, give me a break!]

The second Misaki was a person who abused and criticised me for my looks and character. I already knew about her too-frank personality, but this time her filthy speech made her look like a different woman.

She was straightforwardly making every thought she had in mind into words. The Misaki in front of my eyes was a lump of rudeness.

This is not the Misaki that I wanted to resuscitate.

An abrupt fire ignited in my head and before I realized it, I found myself thrusting the dagger knife I picked from the cabin into her neck.

The sharp edge pierced her throat making her unpleasant voice come to a halt.

Pulling out the knife, brand new blood floated in the floor and Misaki began to aimlessly walk inside the room until she eventually ran out of battery and collapsed on the floor turning into an unmoving doll.

The crafted tools she worked hard to make when she was still a human were painted with her splattered blood turning the room interior into a grotesque picture.

When I noticed that Misaki stopped moving, I was attacked by an intense regret.

I killed Misaki again.

Not because I was defending myself, but only due to my uncontrolled emotions.

I need to acquire another seed from Erisa. However, now that I already submitted Sari's corpse, I don't have any more measures left. If I lazed around, Misaki's head will rot and the worm's athletic meeting will take place inside her skull.

As I was troubled by this obstacle, a sole idea popped in my mind. It could be even described as a revelation.

I took Misaki to the bathroom and ripped off her abdomen with a carver.

Using a medical book I found in her house as a reference, I kept on churning her insides while pushing my way through her pink organs drenched by blood and detached them until I attained what I was looking for before long.

The organ I was looking for was the ovary.

I heard from Erisa about the Shishikuibana's constitution being similar to humans, but I was still delighted by apprehending that the same thing applies to the internal organs as well.

Without further delay, I brought the ovary with me to Erisa in the shop who then showed me a grim face.

[I don't mind if it's just the ovary, but...]

Erisa picked the genitalia I carried by her fingers.

[I'd like it if you told me its owner at least]

When I remained silent to her sharp question, she made a sigh.

[I didn't want to say this but let me go out of my way now. You know about Iruse Misaki's body, I actually hired the Mogura to deliver it for me here. After some negotiation, they stepped back on taking the lower half]

Erisa's words cleared away the doubt I had from a while ago. She told me that she

cut Misaki's head at the construction site. However, I didn't hear anything in the news mentioning the discovery of a headless lump of meat. That is of course because Erisa brought it with her.

[Most of her parts were crushed by the mountain of materials, but I was barely able to safely extract the ovary. Which I used to make the seed I offered you for the first time]

I can't blame her act. Erisa wasn't planning on murdering Misaki in the first place, it was the complete opposite that took place. Rather she had the compassion to offer a piece of bread to the person who slapped her in the face. Although I was the one who received that piece of bread.

[As I thought. You were intending on reviving Misaki from the first time]

[That is if you look at it from the results]

[Even though she tried to kill you?]

[I wanted to hear the reason she did that from her mouth. What left me hesitating was the precaution of whether she will perhaps assault me once I revive her, or the lack of will to waste a seed out of curiosity]

I was about to ask her why she didn't simply brainwash Misaki, but I decided to keep quiet.

I learned the hard way that brainwashing doesn't always succeed. For Erisa who's well versed in the Shishikuibana, it's quite possible that she already thought about such possibility.

[By your unexpected entry, Iruse Misaki took her shape once again. Perhaps if you didn't show up, I would have handed the seed to somebody else]

Saying that, Erisa took out a new seed from the vault.

[My misgiving is about you possibly holding an ideal too high for Iruse Misaki. Just like a painter who is hard to please, try to not smash every piece that doesn't suit your taste]

Feeling as if she saw through my soul, I received the seed and excused myself from the shop.

Returning back to the room, I instantly beheaded the abusive Misaki and planted the seed.

Last time, I left Misaki's corpse in the cabin for a long while. Not to mention her head being damaged, her brain that began rotting is surely the origin of the inferior growth which led to the revival of an ill-natured Misaki. But this time it's okay, I can give birth to a pure, obedient one.

Unfortunately, my wishful thinking was quickly betrayed.

The third Misaki was a child.

Staring at me with her vacant eyes, she repeatedly called "Ku~ya, Ku~ya" like an idiot who doesn't remember anything aside from that name.

She didn't change her words no matter how long I talked to her.

I couldn't even check whether she's possessing an affection towards me or not.

I recalled the moment when she teased me saying "Your appearance is that of a child while your inside is that of an old man".

Isn't it the opposite for you know? You look as an adult while you're a child in the inside.

She didn't reply to my retort.

Getting controlled by my irritation again, I struck the knife in her bare chest.

I dragged the dying Misaki to the bathroom, ripped open her belly and took out the ovary. Right next to me, the rotting headless corpse of the rude Misaki was releasing a concentrated stench.

After bringing the ovary with me to the shop, Erisa handed me the seed without speaking a word. She didn't attempt to convince me anymore.

Regarding the raising of the third body, I remained in Misaki's house instead of returning home. I lost sight of my phone somewhere along the way, but that served more as a relief since I became out of range from any outside contact. I could finally focus completely on reviving Misaki.

Her parent's long absence was also a helpful aspect. I'm not sure whether they're ignoring their daughter or they're just blindly believing in her.

I started sleeping during the day and waking up in the dusk to go wander around the town searching for a new flesh.

Business district, riverbed, railways and dump sites.

With the eyes of a predator, I visited every possible place where I could find a corpse lying on the ground. In case I don't find anything, I then proceed to the vagrants gathering spots or to the prostitution quarters. I either drag the vagrants using money or approach a mature prostitute while wearing the mask of a customer.

[This is not a dump site! You're troubling me by bringing this low-quality flesh every single day. Give me a break]

I listened to Erisa's complaints, however, to me, the quality of the flesh was not important. What really mattered is collecting a large amount in a short time.

In the process of raising the Shishikuibana, I noticed that its development rate is related to the amount of meat I feed it. The more I offer it flesh, the Shishikuibana's maturing speeds up. And so, I continued to collect more flesh whilst hearing out Erisa's complaints every time.

Misaki's house became overflowing from the stink of her headless bodies and the rotting flesh which she had yet to eat. Throwing away the unnecessary parts in a garbage site was out of the question. The entire house got polluted by the extreme hellish miasma, though for me who was immersed in raising up Misaki forgetting to eat and sleep, it didn't really matter. I poured all of my time and labour in bringing her up. Exactly as Erisa mentioned, I kept on doing so for the sake of making my ideal Misaki.

However, seeming to be ridiculing my hard work, the more I redid the resuscitation process, the more Misaki kept swaying away from being human. The outward appearance was indeed consistent, but her inside was empty.

Up from the fourth try, she didn't emit the smallest voice anymore and remained absent-mindedly gaping at my face with her vacant eyes. It was even suspicious if she recognised me or not. Cutting the root didn't result in the least change of emotions in her face.

I killed Misaki out of disappointment and planted the seed in her skull again.

Raising Misaki then killing her to raise her again and kill her.

My life became the embodiment of this repetition.

Who cares about college entry exams anyway.

Continuing to endlessly construct my elaborate doll in the depths of hell, I expected Misaki to smile to me one day. I am a miserable Pygmalion who was

rescued by nobody. The goddess didn't seem to be descending upon me anytime soon.

I eventually lost sight of my purpose. Am I killing Misaki in order to revive her, or am I reviving her in order to kill her? I couldn't distinguish between them anymore.

[You look too pale, are you eating well?]

When I was receiving the seed for the XX time, Erisa pointed to my health condition to get "I'm fine" as a reply from me. But in the actual truth, my body stopped accepting food. I wonder if my mental condition affected my health. No matter what I ate, it just disappears as if I swallowed a dumpling, leaving only an uncomfortable feeling behind.

[You need to eat something of high nutrition, else you will be ruined. If you get too worked up with Iruse Misaki's resuscitation you will end up just like her]

If it's about high nutrition food then I literally have a mountain of it in Misaki's house. However, there's no way for me to resort to eating human flesh.

I am a human, not a Shishikuibana.

I am a human, no matter how much I starve, I wouldn't resort to eating human flesh.

I am a human, I wish for my beloved person to come back.

I am a human, if I fail, I'm going to have to kill Misaki again.

I am a human, I make use of this fact to draw near humanity even more.

I am a human, my left arm that got bitten by the vagrant I attacked is throbbing.

I am a human, I murder people in order to acquire flesh.

I am a human, somehow using the knife became difficult.

I am a human, I rip off Misaki's abdomen in order to acquire the seed.

I am a human, I would never eat that rotten flesh.

I am a human, wait, where did my left arm go again?

Erisa has said it once.

The end abruptly knocks on the doors, without any previous notice nor restraint.

In my case, rather than knocking, it rang the bell.

The season turned into winter.

That faint resounding sound stirred up my heart and drove me out of my abyss of despair.

It's been three months since I decided to stay in Misaki's house and nobody had visited in that period.

Misaki's parents wouldn't ring the bell.

Misaki's friends wouldn't violently strike the door.

The neighbours wouldn't tear down the lock.

The bill collector wouldn't step in the house without permission. Newspaper or religion employees wouldn't scream "It stinks! What's this smell?!" in the corridor of the first floor. A door-to-door salesman wouldn't go up the stairs.

Countless possibilities emerged and disappeared in my mind. My brain changed into a crucible of madness and I went all rigid in Misaki's room while waiting for the end to show up.

The intruder who walked up the stairs opened the door with no hesitation.

[I started thinking about an excuse to make if I struck the wrong house, but...]

A familiar voice of a well-known person.

The last person I was expecting to find me in this place.

[It seems there was no need to worry about that]

Haruhito looked down on me who was lying on the floor.

His face felt somehow grieved.

[Finally, when I thought I found you, things turned out like this. To make the matter even worse, it was you who turned this house into a mess]

[Haruhito, I—]

[You can still talk? That means you're still in your last moments]

Haruhito didn't mention a word about the Misaki above the pot.

I tried standing up, but all I could do at that time was lifting my head.

It's only natural. After all, I have already lost my arms and legs.

My insides are feeling heavy and muddled similar to melting lead.

[I'll scold you later. Now we're going back]

Haruhito displayed a rare tender expression filled with his warmth toward me.

I just recalled that he made the same face in the morning when I was informed of my mother's death. He interrupted my question back then saying "I'll explain things for you later".

Leaving that verbal promise unprotected, I still don't know the reason for my mother's death even until now.

Haruhito reached his hands to my back and lifted me up.

BON!

I fell into the floor.

But I wonder why.

My eyes still reflect my torso held in his hands.

[Dammit! Am I late!?!]

Late from what? I attempted to ask him, but I couldn't let out my voice.

My field of vision is gradually getting darker.

What's this?

What's going on?

What's happening to me?

Someone is singing.

Covered by warmth, I perked my ears to the singing voice.

I was dozing off on someone's chest.

It doesn't look like I'm in Misaki's room.

Is it Haruhito who's embracing me like this?

No. This is another level of softness and warmth. A hug wrapping me up til my very soul.

Why am I lacking the faintest idea of me ending up in this place?

I feel like something grave had occurred, but I don't remember anything besides that.

I moved my neck and noticed the figure of a girl and boy standing on the opposite path.

They were both dressed in the uniform of a school I was attending this last spring.

The boy had an angry expression while the girl seemed to be in the depth of sadness, and they were both shedding floods of tears.

I wonder who they are.

I can somehow recall their faces, yet I can't remember their names.

The girl moved her lips. Even though I could tell what she's saying, her voice didn't reach my ears as if we were separated by a thick wall of glass.

The singing voice is still on-going.

Swaying like a wave.

Swiftly flowing like a clear stream.

Before I realised it, my surroundings changed into a purplish, red field full of blooming flowers.

The flowers that don't seize in their petals get blown off and shaken by the breeze.

The girl and the boy disappeared from my view.

The person hugging me kept singing while walking in the field.

I raised my head trying to confirm that person's face but, I couldn't see well due to the light.

Making our way out of the field, we arrived at a deserted land.

The idyllic ambience was nowhere to be found, but the dazzling light above our heads didn't show any sign of dimming.

Don't be scared, it's not scary. You are fine, you're okay.

Everything will turn out well once you open your eyes again.

That's why you can take a little break now.

It took me quite a bit of time to recognise that the song's lyrics were directed to persuade me.

A warm drop fell on my cheek.

This person is crying.

I'm sorry, Kuuya.

I finally realized that the owner of that sorrowful voice was my mother.

Suddenly the sky was clouded and the light started weakening allowing me to see my mother's face.

Aah, that's right. It was this face. I wonder why I forgot about my mother's face until now.

Strangely enough, it wasn't like I didn't recall her face, but I felt that remembering it will only bring me a strong regret.

Sorry.

My mother repeated the same phrase.

Vaguely wondering about why my mother was apologising and why is she pushing something cool in my neck, a sharp sensation ran through my nape making my consciousness sink into the depth of the darkness.

Chapter 15 (final)



Pygmalion is planting seeds

Snow started falling down as if it was erasing the remains of the fall.

Snowfall in this town was so rare to the point where rumors about it being a weather anomaly, roamed the streets.

Inside the basement of an old art nouveau building hiding in the woods next to the suburbs, a man seeming to be in his forties and a beautiful little girl were sitting with a stainless table interposed between them.

Above the table was a nude boy laying down.

Although, describing him as 'laying down' may be a bit unbecoming for his current condition.

His head was separated from his body and his lost limbs were also placed close to

him.

The cut section of his neck and limbs were dissolved and yellow pus was overflowing from his body filling the room with a wicked odor crooking the nose.

The man and the little girl didn't appear to mind that smell in the slightest and remained gazing at the boy's body.

[Four and a half years, that's indeed an impressive durability]

The short little girl raised her voice which sounded like the ringing of a bell. Her cold and mature manner of speech was unsuitable for her young appearance and somehow ruined her innocent characteristic.

The man was stiffly folding his arms while delivering a grim glance to the little girl.

[You knew about it, didn't you? That Kuuya ran away from home and repeated the revival many times. Why didn't you stop him?]

[I knew about it and I already gave him a warning. But he didn't lend his ears to me. He was completely immersed inside the balm of the Shishikuibana]

The little girl coldly eluded the man's rebuke.

[Giving up on persuading is the same as smothering him. Your words are nothing but an excuse. If you tried doing so more seriously, things wouldn't have proceeded with this result]

[And how about you? Despite being his caretaker, why didn't you realize that he was raising a Shishikuibana?]

[I knew that he was hiding something from me, but not even in my wildest dreams would I think about it being a Shishikuibana]

The man's face became clouded from getting hit in a sensible spot.

[So, there's really no way for him to recover?]

[He's not a lizard or a planarian. Once his parts become rotten, treating them back to normal is out of question. The sole way to restore him back is by planting another seed in his brain again. It could be said that he's lucky for having this remaining possibility]

[You mean I did well by securing his head before it completely rotted?]

The angry man took out a cigarette, however, the little girls rebuked him with “No smoking!” before he held it in his mouth.

The man unwillingly returned the cigarette to the case while observing the room. Then, he noticed that something was missing.

[Where did you put Iruse Misaki’s pot, by the way?]

[I disposed of it]

[What a waste! Even though she was a cutie]

[Her soul has crumbled apart. It is indeed a waste of flesh, but there’s no meaning in resuscitating her]

[Is it the result of what you call as multiple copies?]

The little girl affirmed the man’s question.

[The revival of Shishikuibana is always followed by a loss or disruption of memories, a decline in morals, sociality and also, a partial dysfunction of the mind. Let’s call it as noise. No matter what you do during the resuscitation process, avoiding the noise is an impossible task. It’s similar to dubbing an analogue tape. Do you know about a man called Ando?]

[You mean the man who was found decaying in his apartment recently?]

Ando’s death was a very strange case that gathered a large amount of attention.

Discovered inside a locked mansion, Ando’s body was found scattered around as if it was eaten by carnivorous animals and seemingly left to decay for a few months. Corpses of women with torn off limbs were also discovered along with it and the mass media started unfolding a battle of false reports every single day.

[All of those women were Shishikuibana. Ando was repeatedly whispering in their ears believing that he could brainwash them by altering their memories. What an idiot, there’s no actual way to do so. The Shishikuibana maintain their memories and emotions when reviving]

[In short, he was murdered by his Shishikuibana]

The little girl affirmed the man’s words again.

[The Shishikuibana is always aware of itself not being a human. Above knowing that fact, it could still deceive itself by cleverly acting as one and sometimes even

by feigning silliness. All of that in order to approach the human world and obtain flesh, said differently, something like camouflage. Similar to how Iruse Misaki tried murdering Kuuya and how Ando didn't perceive that their soul was composed only externally while internally, they were holding a rebellious spirit, resulting in him getting killed. If Ando was to repeatedly murder and revive them again, he would be able to increase the noise and torpor their senses. However, that would be no different from monopolising a doll]

[The brain tissues turn into a desert of noise due to the frequent revival. In other words, multiple copies cause a deterioration in the brain's functions, thus the death of the creature as an intelligent form]

[But that's quite strange]

The little girl inclined her head.

[In Kuuya's case, he wasn't mimicking humanity but was really unaware of himself being a Shishikuibana. He didn't look as he was pretending to me, and to top it off, he didn't touch a single piece of flesh he was supplying for Iruse Misaki as well. Did you do something to him?]

[I didn't pull any strings. He forgot everything on his own. Leaving aside the fact of Kuuya being a Shishikuibana, he even forgot about himself being murdered by his mother]

[This is my first time witnessing a case of memory loss]

[I don't really need to inform you about this, but...]

The man dropped his sight toward the deceased boy.

[I started noticing the slight change in my sister-in-law's mentality about the time when my brother suggested the divorce. After she broke up with him and took Kuuya along, her heart became entirely worn out. She was possessed by a firm conviction that Kuuya was the mastermind behind her situation, if he didn't exist, she would've won back my brother's heart. This guy here wasn't to be blamed, he was only dragged into someone else's fight]

[Which led to you embracing Kuuya's ripped off head and knocking on this shop's door]

This time, it was the man's turn to affirm her words.

[I was hearing rumors about you a long time ago, but every time I did, my reaction was a scornful laugh, thinking that such a miraculous sorcery doesn't exist in this

world. And in the end, I found myself grinding my forehead to the ground while begging you to bring Kuuya back to life. Just like a slave asking for his master's forgiveness]

[Still though, thanks to throwing away your dignity, Kuuya was able to return alive. Forgetting about himself being a Shishikuibana in addition]

[Was he asleep when he was murdered, or maybe the shock of witnessing his mom murdering him caused a gap in his memories. I have no idea. The only thing that was obvious is him coming back to life with a pure human heart]

[The lack of memories regarding his death restrained the Shishikuibana's ego from sprouting. Usually, his body should collapse and pass away if he didn't eat human flesh for longer than one month, surprisingly enough, however, he was able to maintain his will and consciousness for a whole three months. I wonder if the lack of self-consciousness as a Shishikuibana exerts an influence on its health. If that was to be true, he would turn into a very interesting example]

[That's not interesting, dammit!]

With an extremely displeased face, the man clicked his tongue.

[The first flesh you fed him was his mother's. Not because she desired it, but because it was your self-righteous judgment, is that right?]

[My sister-in-law was entirely broken, though the only thing she still recalled is Kuuya's face. Seeing the resuscitating Kuuya again made her fall into a panicky condition, it was quite possible for her to try killing him again. So yeah, considering these circumstances, I ended up making that bitter decision]

[It must have been difficult. Not only killing his mother, but a common freelancer like you provisioning corpses is quite...]

[The killing part is not that hard. What requires a lot of effort, is performing that act without leaving the least trace. It would be troubling if somebody was to witness me during those times after all. The quantity of the flesh I take back home is not that large either, so it doesn't really pay off enough]

[And so, you feed him the flesh you acquire after a hard time. Keeping up this laborious task for four and a half years is pretty impressive]

[Every day, I continuously disciplined him to eat meat. In times of my absence, I hire a prostitute to cook the meals for him after making her promise to not pry too much]

[Your cooking skills must have increased]

[Yeah. It just that, I never made him a hamburger steak]

[Why is that?]

[Hamburger steak was the last meal my sister-in-law cooked for him]

Silence dominated the room for a short while.

Eventually, their eyes slowly fell to the boy above the table.

Murdered by his mother, resuscitated with a strange method, carried on with his life a person, fell in love, and destroyed by his deep passion for the girl he loved. A pathetic, pitiful boy.

[Getting back to the main topic]

The man directed his sharp glance to the little girl once again.

[Why didn't you inform Kuuya about the noise following the repeated resuscitation?]

[I just told you, trying to convince him otherwise of his blind belief of bringing back Iruse Misaki is no different from speaking to a wall. All of his beliefs were hanging by a sole expectation of reviving her. Even if he was to be convinced that his actions were completely futile and that it would only break her, then his own mind would've faced the same result. it would be too heavy for him to end his faint love story in such a way]

[Still, staying silent is—]

[Iruse Misaki withered away and can't be restored. That is the "Truth"]

The boy was recreating a soulless doll until the end.

Chasing after the illusion of his beloved girl, he kept on walking through a thorny path without averting his eyes to the surroundings.

The only thing which was waiting for him on the other side of the path was a fleeting and brittle sand tower ready to crumble down the instant he steps inside of it. However, for the boy, he may have seen it as a shining arcadia instead.

[You're making a face as if you're unrelated to all this stuff. Speaking to you makes me feel like I'm having a conversation with a demon]

[My mind and soul are both those of a human. Despite having a fake body]

[You're pretty cruel for a human, though]

[I am an eternal girl who's lived for hundreds of years. I left my human heart behind during this long period. The secret of retaining my youth is a shower of a maiden's blood and black pudding. Hiding the fact of being a Shishikuibana while deceiving people with this flavored story is much safer you know]

The man didn't reply to the little girl's sarcastic answer.

[In the first place, you knew about Kuuya being a Shishikuibana from the start, didn't you]

[I realized that on the way. At first, I thought he was just a middle schooler acting tough by walking in the night town. His family name, Mamesaki had caught my attention, but it didn't ring a bell until he already fed Iruse Misaki the first piece of flesh]

[You didn't try to stop him because you were anticipating this result, no, you were the one who induced Kuuya to walk in this path]

[Why would I do that?]

[To increase the Shishikuibana holding an ego. The reason you let him die was because you desired for his reset]

The little girl drew back her smile to glare at the man with a cold expression.

[That's a silly suspicion. I didn't confirm my doubt of whether he was aware or not until just now to begin with. What is your basis for saying this?]

[You were never someone who gets satisfied by an explanation. Nor were you someone who generously informs others of the secret of making a Shishikuibana that easily. I don't understand the motive behind you frankly telling him the fact you're a Shishikuibana as well. This might not be my concern but, by observing your chain of actions I can't help but see them belonging to one sentence]

[So that's how you arrived at this conclusion of me moving in order to recruit a new member to my club. Increasing my kind means decreasing my food. Obtaining human flesh is not something I could readily do. It's me who will end up with a heavy loss]

[If that wasn't your reason, then I'd appreciate it if you told me why you gave him the first seed for free]

[It's the same as you when you didn't notify Kuuya about himself, I don't think that I am obliged to express my true purpose to you. But one thing is true, which is that I wanted to stop him]

[This is hard to believe. Even if you were thinking so, is it because he was my nephew?]

[Seeing his hands which were consumed with love and pure feelings for Iruse Misaki, I didn't want to witness them getting tainted by blood. It is indeed a sentimental reason if I say so myself]

[Heh, so that's it. Then why did you abandon him in the end? He didn't lend an ear to your warning and lost his self-control. You couldn't bring him back after he was swaying to his ruin, am I wrong? You threw him away just like a child who lost interest in his broken toy]

[Is it strange to throw away a broken toy?]

The man's head turned numb once again from anger due to the little girl's wicked response.

He didn't affirm her words nor did he clearly deny them.

This woman is desiring for a comrade.

Not because she needed someone to comfort her from her loneliness.

She desired for someone sharing the same accursed fate as her, someone corrupted by the addiction of eating human flesh.

—I mean, isn't unfair, being the only one facing this destination?

She would definitely answer something like that with a carefree face.

However, she didn't want a cannibalistic flower depending on its survival instinct and devouring flesh.

All that she desired for, was a family member who's in an environment already aware of himself not being a human, understands that fact very well, and possesses a never-disappearing wound.

Concealing that intent of hers, she makes use of her cajolery and conversation skills to persuade people before offering them the forbidden suggestion.

—Did you ever think about resuscitating your beloved person?

It didn't matter for her whether those who were manipulated by her words end up in ruins.

In contrast to her desires, a person's life was lighter than fluff.

And because of her selfishness, Kuuya was—

The man who was swelling with flames of anger barely managed to control his impulse to hit the little girl.

It wasn't because he considered his situation about reviving the boy, but because he knew that even if he tears off her limbs while she's still alive, the little girl would probably show him a grin, stating something like, "I think I should appreciate the exhibition of a lonely human swallowed up by his anger".

[Aaah! Let's call it quits here]

The man was able to appease his irritation.

[You're awfully selfish and your ideas considerably deviates from the common, However, The point where you're honest with your desires is completely normal I guess]

[How about you try writing a report about me, with the title as "The women who's selling ruin"? Now that you praised me, I can even accept an interview request]

[I didn't praise you and I'm not planning on writing about you either. The food I'd buy with such a poor article income wouldn't taste good anyway. And I don't think there would be somebody who's intrigued enough to read a report like that to begin with]

[You shouldn't be accused of what you're writing. No matter what kind of big talk or idle gossip you write, depending on the reader, it could turn into a descriptive poetry of an uncommon minstrel. I think that's something you are familiar with as a writer]

The little girl placed down a worn out diary she was holding in her arm at the corner of the table.

[What's that?]

[A lesson explaining the heavy compensation a person would have to pay if he rebelled against God's will, a fable written down by a single man]

[–heck does that mean]

The little girl peered at the man's face with her black eyes similar to the abyss.

[So what are you planning to do, Mr. Haruhito Mamesaki? Are you going to revive Kuuya once again?]

[There's no need to answer such a question]

[You've already acknowledged the danger of the deteriorating copies, right?]

[I will keep looking after this guy, even if his brain grows completely empty]

[Excuse me, that was a foolish question, wasn't it?]

A brand new hole was drilled in the boy's head.

[I don't have any relatives to prove this but, an uncle being devoted to his nephew this much is quite unnatural. It seems close to a father doing his best to look after his son while resorting to every possible means]

[Isn't that simply a silly suspicion?]

[Did I strike the mark?]

[Give me a break]

The man standing behind the little girl who was skilfully handling the seed felt like he witnessed the figures of countless engravers standing in a row, waiting for her to bestow them a hammer and chisel.

Don't they realize the little girl's sly? Or maybe they're already aware of the ruin arranged for them. Either way, they were all foolish engravers trifled, confused and charmed by the Shishikuibana's sweet allure.

Those who were bewildered and deceived by the words of sorcery released from her fascinating lips; exactly like as a worker bee offering its collected pollen to the queen, they continued offering her their blood and flesh until they were reduced to ashes by the despair of the hellfire born from their brought up nihilism.

–So I'm one of those idiots too, huh!

Ridiculing his own actions, the man watched the little girl silently burying the seed inside the ashy brown deserted field.

Translator's Note

Hey!

We are finally at the last chapter now, after 3 months and 3 weeks. I'm aware that the release frequency might be a bit slow, sorry about that. But still, I ended up finishing the entire novel this time, unlike most of the stuff I do.

Anyway, thank you for following the story up till today!

Enjoy the last chapter!

-Reizenchuu

Editor's Note

E/N: Hey, it's Xilphidae!

Well that was quite an interesting info-dump. I don't know about you all but I finally/possibly found out why Haruhito choked from Kuuya's food and Misaki didn't. Afterall, if JP novels taught us one thing(or me that is), it's that characters who can't cook, really can't cook, **EVER!**(Except for Shion of "Slime Tensei", that damn cheat skill). Anyway, thanks for reading and joining the dark side(yes, you joined, by reading this story, you joined).

Xilphidae, signing out.

P.S. I already ate your promised cookies.

P.P.S. My bad.

The Pygmalion is Planting Seeds

Author: **Bouki Tsuchikana** (坊木椎哉)

Illustrator: **Tsukugu** (つくぐ)

Translated by **Moon Rabbit Translations**

[Translator's site.](#)